



PUBLISHING THE GOSPEL

CGI's small, hardworking team in the Philippines, led by Rene D. Corpuz, has reprinted many [church booklets](#) for redistribution. Previously published articles are attractively compiled in their quarterly Armor of God magazine. These efforts complement the group's monthly Bible study campaigns, which are advertised in national newspapers. (Note: The materials shown are not available outside of the Philippines.)

Hope Is!

Hope is the soothing balm of sleep to heavy-laden eyes;

Hope is the arch of the rainbow across gray-colored skies;

Hope is that first fat robin that says spring's on its way;

Hope is the peace of twilight at the close of a busy day;

Hope is, and was, and will be, for always hope lives on; defeating fear in the heart of man as dark

[CGI's Filipino office](#)

zealously spreads "good news"

METRO MANILA, Philippines—Greetings from the Philippines office of the Church of God International! It's been quite a while since we made our report concerning the developments of the work in this part of the world. We are happy to share with you that we have accomplished quite a lot all these years since the demise of our beloved ministers and leaders: Messrs. Pike Mirto, Santiago Co, and Posgado Guilles. We have printed a good number of church booklets and brochures, and published several issues of the full-color Armor of God magazine.

[Ian Boyne—Taking the Long View](#)

Fifteen years ago, a young journalist and devotee of Herbert W. Armstrong walked in to the studios of the then Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation and began the first installment of a programme he had conceived called Profile. At the time, programmer Lois Gayle had agreed to "give it a try and see how it goes after three months."

[If I could...](#)

A short story based on Luke 8:44

An eagle hovered above gracefully, its wings slicing through the early morning sky along the coast of Galilee with little effort.

[Four baptisms conducted in Bath, Ohio](#)

BATH, Ohio—What a Sabbath was had in Bath, Ohio, on November 24! The Bath Town Hall was nearly packed to capacity.

[Couple celebrates 60 years of marriage, 84th birthday](#)

PITTSBURGH, Pennsylvania—Steve and Irene Mesko of Ellwood City celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary on January 10. Also, Steve celebrated his eighty-fourth birthday.

[Festival Theology](#)

Editor's Note: Mr. Ramocan, a deacon of the Kingston, Jamaica congregation of the Church of God International, is pursuing a Masters in theology at the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology. The following is a research paper he presented in partial fulfillment of a course in Interdisciplinary Studies.

[Florida congregations](#)

is defeated by dawn;

Hope is the folded flower
asleep in the heart of a
pad;

Hope is the candlelight of
faith lit by the Hand of
God.

â€”Juan Samoiloff,
Mansfield, TX

Hamm-Roush **wedding announced**

TEXARKANA,
Arkansasâ€”Right along
with baptisms, the most
wonderful of ceremonies
are weddings.

Marangs **report on Wichita and Abilene meetings**

On January 5, Bronson
James came to Wichita to
give the Bible study,
special music, and the
sermon. Frank helped out
by being the song leader.

meet to celebrate Stanton-Kelly marriage

SARASOTA, Floridaâ€”On February 2, the fellowship groups in Sarasota and Largo-Clearwater met together in celebration of the wedding of Lisa Kelly and Dan Stanton, which took place on January 5 in Bath, Ohio.

Weekly services in Abilene

ABILENE, Texasâ€”Thanks to the effort of Frank and Margie Marang, there is now a fellowship group that meets in Abilene every Sabbath. Videotapes of complete Sabbath services are played every Saturday at 11:00 a.m. A meeting room is reserved for our group in the Budget Host Inn at 3210 Pine St., Abilene, Texas. Thatâ€™s at the corner of Pine and I-20, on the southwest corner.

Chili cook-off

warms Springfield group

SPRINGFIELD, Missouriâ€”Our annual winter chili cook-off was held on December 19. The preparation of chili with or without beans is a treat. It was cool outdoors, but with the chili and the warm fellowship, it was warm inside.

Questions

The Spirit of Compromise

Show me a person who has fallen away from Jesus Christ and Iâ€™ll show you a person who began making compromises in his or her life! Compromise after compromise after compromiseâ€¦until the inevitable end resultâ€”the eventual falling away from the truth.

In Loving Memory...

Trust and Obey

Essential Elements of Faith

Among the many biblical topics we have heard and read about, the subject of faith perhaps is near the top of the list. We hear stories of people with powerful faith. We hear of how important it is in facing lifeâ€™s problems. Let us take a few minutes and consider two aspects that not only define it but give us guidance in how to exercise our own faith and grow in it toward the perfection of Jesus Christ.

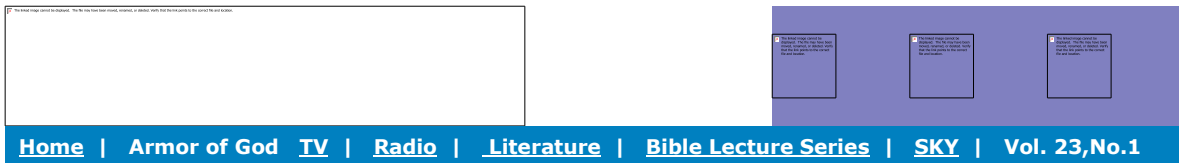
Smelling Good But Feeling Bad

Synthetic Perfumes, Colognes, and Scents Are Turning Up Noses

Have you ever wondered which personal fragrance or perfume will make you the most attractive? If the person youâ€™re trying to attract happens to be a member of the Sierra Club, then the answer is probably none. In California last year, the clubâ€™s San Francisco and Loma Prieta chapters resolved to â€œtake action to discourage the use of fragrance products in all public places,â€• and advocate that this position become a regional and national policy.

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Festival Theology

By Seth George Ramocan

Editorâ€™s Note: Mr. Ramocan, a deacon of the Kingston, Jamaica congregation of the Church of God International, is pursuing a Masters in theology at the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology. The following is a research paper he presented in partial fulfillment of a course in Interdisciplinary Studies.

Introduction

~~~~~It was the British historian Isaiah Berlin who once said,â€œOne of the deepest human desires is to find a unitary pattern in which the whole of human experience, past, present and future, actual, possible and unfulfilled, is symmetrically ordered.â€•

~~~~~Although Isaiah Berlinâ€™s statement pertained to the natural order, his visionary pronouncement resonates with the quest of biblical scholars and theologians to find a â€œcentral theme in Scripture that unites the entire biblical revelationâ€• (Lewis and Demerest, Integrative Theology, p. 307).

~~~~~Theologians and Bible scholars have for many decades sought to identify key concepts and themes for interpreting and organizing the biblical data. Among the major organizing principles that have emerged are Covenant Theology, Dispensational Theology, Kingdom Theology, and Promise Fulfillment Theology.â€ In general, these uniplex theological models have sought to show continuity in Godâ€™s

purpose and plan in the Old and New Testaments, but have so far failed to integrate all of the biblical data.

~~~~~In an attempt to resolve this shortfall, two prominent scholars, G. Lewis and B. Demarest, have proposed a multiplex approach (the use of several themes of theology) to integrate the Scriptures. The scholarly work of Lewis and Demarest, under the theme "Spiritual Institutional Theology," has significantly improved the integration of the biblical data by pulling on the strengths of the existing models. This approach however, defeats the objective of finding a single theme for organizing the biblical data.

~~~~~This paper seeks to further explore the possibility of a uniplex theme for organizing the scriptural data. The Scriptures seemingly support the view of a single theme as expressed in the apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

~~~~~"He has made known to us his secret purpose, in accordance with the plan which he determined beforehand in Christ, to be put into effect when the time was ripe: namely, that the universe, everything in heaven and earth, might be brought into unity in Christ" (Ephesians 1:9-11).

~~~~~This paper will attempt to present the biblical festivals, outlined in Leviticus 23, as the main organizing principle of Scripture, through which God has been working throughout time to bring "the universe, everything in heaven and earth" into unity in Christ" (Ephesians 1:11). It will also show that these festivals have a much wider scope than the existing theological models for covering the biblical data.

## 1. The Scope of the Festivals for Organizing the Scriptures

~~~~~Leviticus 23 lists seven festivals or feast days, which God commanded Israel to observe. God told Israel "these are the feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy assemblies." The continuity or discontinuity of these annual festivals beyond Israel's history can be determined by their antitypical meaning in the New Testament. If these festivals were limited to the economy of Israel and the first advent of Christ, their purpose would have certainly ended after the cross. But if they prefigured important events in God's plan of salvation that are yet to be fulfilled, they hold important significance and meaning for the Church today. The first four of these festivals, the Passover, First Fruits, Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost are explicitly recognized by the New Testament, while the last three, Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles, are implicitly acknowledged in the New Testament by use of their themes.

~~~~~In his book God's Festivals, Part Two, Dr. Samuel Bacchiocchi speaks to the unique characteristics of these festivals and how they work together to integrate the biblical data as an organic whole. Bacchiocchi says:

~~~~~"An important characteristic of these festivals is that they form a unified cycle with a beginning, progression and completion. They move from the

feast of Passover, the Exodus deliverance, to the Feast of Tabernacles, the safe arrival to the Promised Land. The sequential order of the feasts reveals an interdependence and progression. The interdependence among the feasts is evident in the fact that the purpose and meaning of each feast depends upon the preceding one forming an organic whole. The progression of the feasts is not only significant in their historical events, but also in terms of their prefiguration of the unfolding of God's redemptive acts • (pp. 29–30).

Evidently, these festivals have the systematic, progressive and integrative elements for organizing the biblical data.

2. The Scope of the Festivals for Spanning the Biblical Data

It is commonly believed that these festivals, which God gave to Israel, originated with the Sinaitic Covenant, and ended at Calvary. A closer examination of the Scriptures however, reveals that they span a much wider period of time beginning with creation, and continuing beyond the millennial reign of Christ. In Genesis 1:14 God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years."

There are many authoritative references and scholarly works that attest to the meaning and application of the Hebrew word *mo'ed*, translated "seasons" in Genesis 1:14. In the interest of space, I will refer to only four of these:

The Strong's Concordance says *mo'ed* means "sacred season, set feast, appointed season, b. appointed meeting, d. appointed sign or signal, e. tent of meeting. Congregation" (Strong's reference #4150).

Adam Clarke's Commentary says of *mo'ed*, "these are times on which the sacred festivals should be held. In this sense the word frequently occurs; and it was right that at the very opening of his revelation God should inform man that there were certain festivals which should be annually celebrated to his glory."

The Abingdon Bible Commentary says, "These sacred times are older than man, and exist independently of him; when he is formed he must see that they are duly observed. The presence of these heavenly bodies will leave him without excuse, for they are good, they are all man needs for his religious duty, and all that God intends."

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia says, "These seasons were seasons for worship. The word *mo'ed* occurs some 219 times; in 149, it is translated "congregation" and in about 50 other instances by "solemn assembly." Thus before ever man was created, God had provided for him times to worship • (seasons).

The apostle Paul concurs with the creation origin of these festivals in his letter to the Ephesians: "For we are God's workmanship, created in

Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do • (Ephesians 2:10).

These festivals therefore originated prior to the creation of man, and so predate the biblical covenants, promises, dispensations, and institutions, giving them the ability to cover earlier biblical data. These festivals also have important eschatological significance. The Scriptures show that during the future millennial reign of Christ, God will teach mankind to observe them (Zechariah 14:16). It stands to reason then, that they are potentially capable of covering the later biblical data since they postdate time.

3. The Passover as an Example of how God's Festivals Integrate the Biblical Data

I will now attempt to show how these festivals unite the biblical data. It will not be possible to detail all seven festivals in this paper due to limited space. I therefore propose to detail the first, the Passover, as an example, and to give a summary of the other six to demonstrate how God has used them throughout time to teach and enjoin his people to His plan of salvation and restoration.

The Passover is the unifying theme in the Old and New Testaments for God's acts of redemption. It addresses the issues covered by Covenant Theology, as outlined by Lewis and Demarest, namely, that:

(1) Israel and the Church have been the covenant people of God in all ages. (2) The seals or sacraments of the Old Covenant "Passover and circumcision" find their analogies in the sacraments of the New Covenant. (3) The Old and New Covenants constitute a unity. (4) The Old Covenant had the same gospel, the same hope of eternal life, the same justification by faith and the same mediator (Christ) as the New Covenant. (5) All Old Testament saints constituted the Church, all be it "the Church yet in its childhood" • (p. 308-309).

In the Old Testament, the Passover evolved from a private family sacrifice of a paschal lamb, to an elaborate and solemn sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem.

While maintaining its Old Testament meaning of deliverance and redemption from sin, the Passover was transformed in the New Testament to take on a Christological, ecclesiological, and eschatological significance. Samuele Bacchiocchi explains that through the Passover, God used a single plan of redemption to work with Israel and the Church. He says, "The Passover is a typical institution, which served in the Old Testament to commemorate the inauguration of Israel's salvation history and to nourish the hope of the future messianic deliverance and restoration of Israel. The antitypical fulfillment of Passover is manifested in the New Testament in three significant ways. Christologically, the Passover was fulfilled at the Cross when Christ was sacrificed as our "Paschal Lamb." Ecclesiologically, Passover is fulfilled in the Church as believers appropriate the reality of salvation accomplished at the Cross, through the

emblems of Christ's body, and Eschatologically, it will be fulfilled in the coming Kingdom of God • (p. 33).

Not only does the Passover span biblical history from Sinai to Calvary and beyond, the Bible indicates that it predated the Exodus event. In support of this view, the Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology states, "In Ex 12:21, Moses tells the Israelites to "sacrifice the pesach" without defining the term. This is evidence that some kind of Passover festival was already known and practiced by the Israelites prior to the exodus • (Passover).

Indeed, the Genesis account reveals a type of the New Testament Passover emblems. "Melchizedek [a high priest] brought bread and wine for the exhausted warriors and bestowed his blessing upon Abraham • (Genesis 14:17, emphasis supplied). This view is further confirmed in the dialogue between Isaac and Abraham in Genesis 22: "..."but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" asked Isaac. Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son • (Genesis 22:7"8, emphasis supplied).

Indeed, God provided the lamb, which saved Isaac's life.

Some scholars believe that the first Passover took place in the Garden of Eden. This view supports the claim of some Covenant Theologians that the Church began with Adam. In commenting on the skin used to clothe Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:21, Barnes Notes states:

"They were most likely obtained by the death of animals; and as they do not appear yet to have been slain for food, some have been led to conjecture that they were offered in sacrifice-slain in prefiguration of that subsequent availing sacrifice which was to take away sin • (1997 by Biblesoft).

The Passover is the festival God has designed to enjoin His people to His covenants. When Jesus instituted wine for the New Testament Passover, He said drink it because "this is My blood of the new covenant • (Matthew 26:27"28). The writer of the book of Hebrews explains that, after God enjoined the Old Covenant on ancient Israel, the covenant was ratified by the ceremony of the sprinkling of blood. We see also the shedding of blood at the Adamic Covenant (Genesis 3:22), and the Noahic Covenant (Genesis 8:20). The Bible writers called this the "blood of the covenant • (Hebrews 9:18"20).

The Passover in the Old and New Testaments teaches mankind about God's call, grace, forgiveness, deliverance, guidance, and covenants. It also symbolizes man's response to God through faith, repentance, and baptism. Each of the other six festivals similarly addresses particular aspects of God's plan of salvation. I now give a summary of each.

4. The Feast of Unleavened Bread: God's Call to Holiness

Through the Passover, God delivers man from sin. The feast that immediately follows the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, teaches God's people how to live a holy life by overcoming sin. According to the Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, "just as Israel was to remove all yeast from their homes during the subsequent Feast of Unleavened Bread, Christians should avoid contamination by expelling immoral members from their congregations. Paul thus sees the church as something of a new community of a new exodus, and is concerned that Christians maintain the purity of their community" • (leaven).

In the New Testament, Jesus taught the meaning of leaven to include corrupt doctrine (Matthew 13:33 and Luke 13:21) and corrupt practices (Mark 8:15). The apostle Paul, in challenging the Corinthians to proper Christian behavior, appeals to the Feast of Unleavened Bread as a model of good Christian conduct (2 Corinthians 5:7).

An indication that this feast was known and practiced prior to the Exodus event is evidenced in the book of Genesis where Lot prepared a meal for the angelic visitors, "baking bread without yeast" • (Genesis 19:3). God has designed a festival that teaches his people the principle of overcoming sin, an issue to which the Old and New Testaments devote much attention. The existing theological systems pay little attention to this important aspect of the biblical data.

5. The Feast of Pentecost: The Founding of Israel and the Church and the Gift of the Holy Spirit

The Feast of Pentecost addresses the issues covered by "Spiritual Institutional Theology." • In the Old Testament, the Feast of Pentecost evolved from a mere celebration of Israel's agricultural spring harvest into a feast commemorating the giving of the law and the inauguration of Israel as a covenant people.

In the New Testament, God chose the first Pentecost after Jesus Christ's resurrection to inaugurate His Church. As God wrote His laws upon tablets of stone at Sinai, so he also inscribes His laws upon the hearts and minds of believers.

Pentecost also covers the biblical teaching regarding firstfruits. Just as the harvests in ancient Israel could not begin their harvest until God accepted the wave-sheaf offering, (Leviticus 23:9-14) so the harvesting of mankind could not begin until Jesus Christ "the Firstfruits" • was accepted by His Father (1 Corinthians 15:17-20). The acceptance of the firstfruits by God guaranteed the rest of the harvest. The Feast of Pentecost teaches that God has a harvesting principle that begins with Christ (the barley harvest in the early spring), followed by the saints (the wheat harvest in the late spring) and culminating with the rest of humanity (the fruit harvest in the fall). The resurrection of Christ is the firstfruits of those that slept (1 Corinthians 15:20), and this guarantees the resurrection of the saints. The resurrection of the saints is the firstfruits of

the entire creation (1 Corinthians 15:17), and this guarantees the healing of the nations over which Christ and the saints will rule.

6. The Feast of Trumpets: The Return of Jesus Christ.

~~~~~Ancient Israel celebrated this festival with a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts • (Leviticus 23:24). God used a trumpet to herald His meeting with Israel when He descended upon Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16). Trumpets were used to sound a warning (Numbers 10:9).

~~~~~In the Old Testament, the Feast of Trumpets marks the future fulfillment of the many Old Testament prophecies that speak of a Messiah coming as a king who will rule with power and authority.

~~~~~The writers of the New Testament revealed additional understanding of the significance of the blowing of trumpets. Paul spoke of the day when the people of God will be resurrected to immortal life (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The apostle John associated the blowing of a trumpet with Christ's return (Revelation 11:15). Jesus prophesied seven plagues to be poured out upon a sinning world, with a trumpet blast announcing each (Revelation 8-9). Throughout the Old and New Testaments, trumpets have been God's way of sounding warning or assembling His people to meet Him. To both Israel and the Church, this important symbol ushers in the coming of the Messiah. The existing theological models pay little attention to this important aspect of the biblical data.

#### 7. The Feast of Tabernacles: God's Dwelling With Man

~~~~~The Feast of Tabernacles addresses the issues covered by Kingdom Theology and Promise Fulfillment Theology. These variably speak to the establishment of the Kingdom of God beyond history, the presence of this Kingdom through the life and work of Jesus Christ, and the promises leading to the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

~~~~~God commanded ancient Israel to build temporary tabernacles, sometimes called booths, to live in during this festival. These reminded them of their release from slavery and their dwelling in booths when God brought them out of Egypt. In stark contrast to the hardship of slavery, this festival emphasizes rest, peace, and prosperity as it meets the needs the people.

~~~~~The New Testament emphasizes that, as with booths, or temporary dwellings, our physical life is transitory (2 Corinthians 5:1-2). The Christological fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles is seen in the metaphor of Tabernacles to introduce the nature and mission of Christ (John 1:1). Ecclesiologically, the Bible speak of the church and believers as the tabernacle of God (1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22). Eschatologically, the Feast of Tabernacles will be observed during the millennial reign of Christ (Zechariah 14:16), and finally, God will be a

“booth” • over His people with His presence (Revelation 7:15). The Bible shows that prior to the Exodus the Feast of Tabernacles was known and practiced by the people of God (Hebrews 11:9–10, 13–15).

Conclusion

Should Christians today observe these festivals? To answer this question one must consider God’s basic instruction: “These are the Lord’s appointed feasts, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times” • (Leviticus 23:4). As explained earlier, if these festivals were limited to the economy of Israel and the first advent of Christ, their purpose would certainly have ended after the crucifixion. But if they prefigure important events in God’s plan of salvation that are yet to be fulfilled, they continue to hold important significance and meaning for the Church today. It is in this sense that the apostle Paul encouraged the Colossian Church against the Gnostic critics who were judging the Sabbath and festival observances of the Christians there: “Let no man judge you...in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come” • (Colossians 2:16–17).

These festivals are shadows of important future events to be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. For example, the Feast of Trumpets foreshadows the greatest hope of the believer—the resurrection of the saints to immortal life at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The Christian observance of this feast celebrates, and witnesses to, the return of Jesus Christ. Indeed, each of these feasts focuses on different aspects of the work of Jesus Christ in the life of the Church and the believer.

The weekly Sabbath, the first of the festivals listed in Leviticus 23, celebrates Jesus Christ as the Creator of the heavens and the earth (Exodus 20:8), an important witness to a world that seeks to worship the created things rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25). The Passover celebrates Jesus Christ as our Redeemer: “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” • (1 Corinthians 5:7). Jesus said the Passover will have a further fulfillment in the Kingdom of God. The Feast of Unleavened Bread celebrates Jesus Christ as “the true bread that came down from heaven” • (John 6:32) which replaces the leaven in our lives “that we may be a new lump” • (1 Corinthians 5:7). The Feast of Pentecost celebrates the dwelling of Jesus Christ in our lives through His Holy Spirit, which guarantees our salvation. The Feast of Trumpets heralds the return of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the saints to immortal life. The Day of Atonement celebrates Jesus Christ as our High Priest, which gives us direct access to the Throne of God. The Feast of Tabernacles celebrates Jesus Christ as the soon coming King of Kings who will reign over the coming Kingdom of God (Revelation 5:10). Indeed these festivals demonstrate, step-by-step, how God is fulfilling His purpose “to bring the universe, everything in heaven and earth” into unity in Christ” • (Ephesians 1:9–11).

It is evident from the foregoing that the biblical festivals provide a systematic framework for organizing, interpreting, and integrating the biblical data. They order the biblical data in a progression that begins with God’s act of redemption and

culminate with the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ These festivals have evolved with the biblical revelation through time, giving them an historical, Christocentric, ecclesiological, and eschatological significance and meaning.

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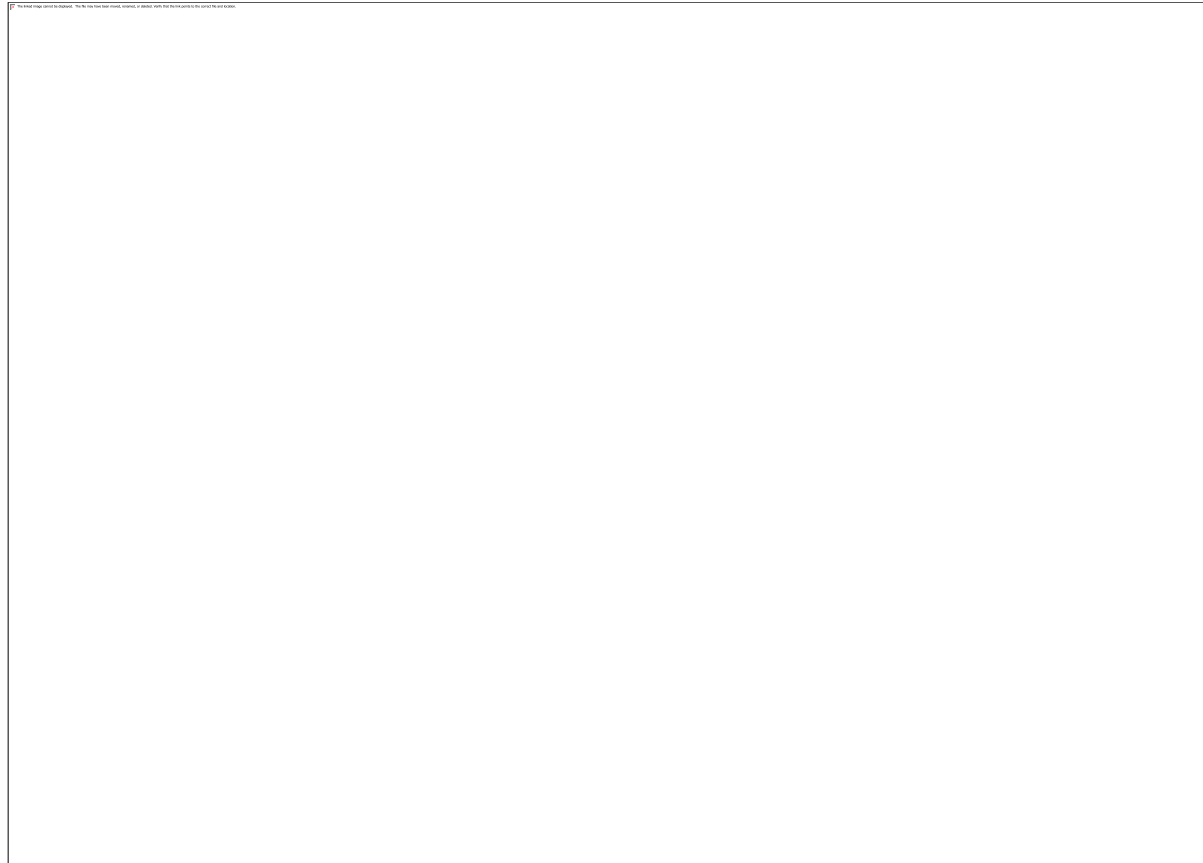
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CGI™s Filippino office zealously spreads “good news”™

By Rene D. Corpuz

METRO MANILA, Philippines—Greetings from the Philippines office of the Church of God International! It’s been quite a while since we made our report concerning the developments of the work in this part of the world. We are happy to share with you that we have accomplished quite a lot all these years since the demise of our beloved ministers and leaders: Messrs. Pike Mirto, Santiago Co, and Posgado Guilles. We have printed a good number of church booklets and brochures, and published several issues of the full-color Armor of God magazine.



Currently, the office has two full-time employees, Rene D. Corpuz, who supervises the daily operations, and Alvin M. De Leon, who manages the mailing section. We also have a part-time contractual graphics and layout designer, Ray Necio, who handles the design and layout of the Armor of God magazine as well as other church publications.

For the past two years, the office hosted monthly Bible studies in Metro Manila held at the EDSA Plaza Shangri-La Hotel, Mandaluyong City; and Makati Shangri-La Hotel, Makati City, every first Saturday at 2:00-4:00 p.m. These monthly Bible studies were conducted by Messrs. Adriel Mirto, Winston Co, and Rene Corpuz. In the last six months of this year, the office also supported monthly Bible study campaigns held in Naga City and Iloilo City, conducted by Messrs. Teddy and Joel Barrios (Naga) and Ed Rodrigo (Iloilo).

These Bible studies consisted of a 30-minute video presentation using the Armor of God television program, a 30-minute lecture, and a one-hour "question and answer" forum. Print ads in national papers such as the Daily Inquirer, Manila Bulletin and Philippine Star were placed two to three days before every Bible study. These ads generate about 15-20 attendees each session, but we receive lots of phone calls, postal mail, and e-mail responses requesting the literature offered in the ads from all over the Philippines.

The local Armor of God magazine, a quarterly publication, has 6,000 subscribers to date. We are able to print and mail all of this because of the support provided by the subscribers, but much of its funding comes from the members of the church. Winston Co, pastor of the Manila church, and some local members also assist the editorial team of the Armor of God magazine.

As the Internet grows in the Philippines, the office also developed a local Website at www.cgiphils.org (updated monthly). We offer the local Armor of God magazine in electronic form (PDF format), church booklets and brochures, and downloadable video files of the Armor of God television programs (<http://videos.cgiphils.org>), hosted by Messrs. Bronson James, Vance Stinson, Charles Groce, and Bill Watson, and various sermons of ministers in Tyler, Texas. Right now, we are in the process of converting more videotaped sermons into downloadable video media that can be viewed through the Internet or sent through the postal mail for those who request the video CD format.

This year we will continue to hold our synchronized monthly Bible studies in Manila, Naga, and Iloilo Cities. We hope to bring in more people to these monthly public meetings and reach out to more Filipinos through the national print ads. We will continue to produce the local Armor of God magazine and print new publications coming from the CGI Tyler office as they come. May God continue to provide the resources that we need as we continue to preach the good news of the coming Kingdom of God.

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Ian Boyne – Taking the Long View

Editor's Note: Ian Boyne is pastor of the Kingston, Jamaica, congregation of the

Church of God International and coordinator of the church's work in the Caribbean, and is well known within the Church of God movement for his vigorous evangelistic efforts in the island. He also hosts the TV series Profile, which, according to writer Declan Morant, is "arguably the most successful and certainly the most durable non-seasonal series on Jamaican television." • The following article was recently featured in a local TV guide. We thought you would find it interesting.

By Declan Morant

Fifteen years ago, a young journalist and devotee of Herbert W. Armstrong walked in to the studios of the then Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation and began the first installment of a programme he had conceived called Profile. At the time, programmer Lois Gayle had agreed to "give it a try and see how it goes after three months."

~~~~~Fifteen years later, Ian Boyne is still the host of arguably the most successful and certainly the most durable non-seasonal series on Jamaican television (School's Challenge has been on longer but is seasonal). The milestones stretch as far as the viewer cares to look, for both the programme and the host: five National Journalism awards (including the first at the age of eighteen); the only journalist to receive awards for work in both print and television; a special honour award for religious journalism (in print).

~~~~~Add to that a gallery of guests that could be proudly displayed in any TV trophy room around the world: undoubted leaders in the religious, political, scientific, entertainment and social spheres: Farrakahn; Beenie Man; Butch Stewart; U.S congressmen, Nobel prize winners, Grammy and Oscar winners; the only two black billionaires on the upcoming Forbes magazine annual list of the world's richest men, Robert Johnson and Michael Lee-Chin. The confident, the colourful, the controversial, the compelling, both locals and foreigners, have all graced the set of Profile.

~~~~~If Boyne is not the most modest of men, then he could be forgiven. But the natural question is: How has he managed to more than hold his own for the last decade and a half? He attributes his success to several factors but primary among them are versatility and preparation. "I'll tell you," he says in his now customary ebullience. "There's no other programme in the electronic media that offers people the range of issues and interests with the level of command over those interests that I have."

~~~~~That command of the issues, he credits to a number of early influences. He reserves the highest praise for two journalists in particular: John Maxwell and the late Peter Abrahams. The latter, he says, gave him a great deal of confidence and encouragement on his chosen path. But Maxwell, he says, "took me under his wing and amazed me with the breadth and depth of his learning." • He describes the [Observer] columnist as "the most cosmopolitan journalist working in Jamaica today" • and laments the parochialism that he believes now dominates local journalistic practice.

Boyne does however have some favourable assessments for several of his colleagues. Notably, he considers Nationwide's Cliff Hughes to be the best of and admires Observer columnist Mark Wignall for his "street smarts."

So, after a decade and a half, what does he see as the legacy of the programme? "Simply, it is that this show has helped people to succeed at life in terms of giving them a road map of sorts. The whole self-improvement industry took off in the U.S. in the '80s because people realized that they needed to have models of success, to hear how other individuals have dealt with obstacles and made something of themselves. I saw that trend very early and that's part of what we try to achieve with the show, to motivate people toward excellence."

In fact, Boyne insists that what seems to the viewer to be a homogenous entity is actually several programmes in one. "I'm really doing a number of things in the same format," he explains. "We have the personality profile type of programme with the one-one, and we do the more political type of show, but we also have those programmes where we look at topical and controversial issues through some of the leading thinkers and opinion-shapers of the day."

To this mix Boyne brings his and a knack for easing otherwise gun-shy guests into the interview process. "I go to great lengths to ensure that when the guest gets out on the set, there's already a rapport between us, no matter who it is." He typically talks with guests at least one hour before commencing in studio, keeping the mood conversational even while focused on the issues.

It's an approach that has worked well for both viewers and guests. New NCB boss Michael Lee-Chin said his recent stint with Boyne was "the best interview" he had ever done. And the programme is steadily building an audience in the New York metro area where it is included on the Caribbean International Network (CIN) package of media impresario Stephen Hill. Profile goes to a potential audience of over 5 million via channel 73 in New York. Boyne is in fact no stranger to international coverage, having graced both VH-1 and Comedy Central cable channels (the former with a programme called Caribbean Lifestyles).

All of which leaves him even more confident than ever of continuing at the top of the talk heap. "My real competition is not from CVM or any other local electronic media. My competition is CBS, CNN, FOX, and all the other hundreds of choices that people now have with television." Boyne further dismisses the charge that the "talking heads" format is spent and the attendant charge that after fifteen years, he has nowhere to go but down. "Again, when you look at the best in the international field, these are all guys who have been doing this thing for a minimum of 20 years, and some, like Mike Wallace [CBS's 60 Minutes] and Hugh Downs [ABC] for even 40 years," he counters. "Once you have the substance, and you are getting the information across, you will hold people's attention."

Still Boyne has not forgotten a basic principle of television.

“It has to entertain. What you’re presenting is, after all, a show, and there’s a certain art to good tele-journalism that makes it interesting. I know what audiences really want, and I know what they want to know of or from a particular guest.

“The show looks set to go on|and on.

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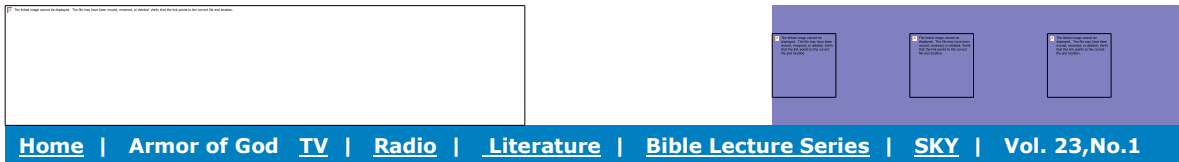
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If I could...

A short story based on Luke 8:44

By Horane Smith

An eagle hovered above gracefully, its wings slicing through the early morning sky along the coast of Galilee with little effort.

The eyes of Rebecca, a middle-aged woman of Gadarena, a small village along the rugged coastline, followed the eagle as it flew past her window and disappeared into the blueness of infinity. She was a troubled woman; troubled because of this mysterious sickness that had been a menace in her life for the past twelve years.

Repeatedly, Rebecca, accompanied by her husband Mathias, had gone to Ozi, Gadarena’s lone physician, only to be told there wasn’t much he could do.

“You have an issue of blood, my dear,” and there isn’t much I can do about it,” he had told her on the first trip. On the last visit, Ozi gave her some herbs, a concoction of

various types of plants that have reportedly helped a lot of his patients with a similar problem. “I tell you this will help, Rebecca. It’s the best I can do,” Ozi assured her.

Those words came ringing back to Rebecca’s ears now because that was about a month ago, and here she was still suffering from this problem. What is next? Rebecca asked herself.

The presence of the eagle reminded her that today was the day Jesus of Nazareth would be passing through the village. She got word yesterday from a relative that He would be passing there on His way from Galilee, where this Jesus is said to have showed healing powers never seen before.

Reports circulating all over the land said He had let the blind see, the dumb speak, and the crippled walk, and then there was the most incredible of all—He had raised someone from the dead.

Immediately, Rebecca and Mathias decided that they must go and see this Jesus that some said was the prophesied Messiah and also the Son of God.

As Rebecca got dressed to begin their walk into the town, her mind was on nothing else but this Jesus. “If I could...,” she told herself. “If I could only touch him, I think I can be healed.”

As the minutes flashed by, her belief in that notion began to grow more and more. Rebecca had heard the stories about a Messiah that would return to take away the sins of the world. However, she possessed little knowledge about anything else regarding that.

The walk into town was only ten minutes and Rebecca and Mathias were amazed to see the crowd already gathered. In fact, when they got there, they saw the crowd surrounding the central figure of a man.

“That must be Jesus,” Mathias whispered.

“It’s Him! It’s Him!” Rebecca said, excitement building up in her voice. Mathias was surprised to see his wife smiling again. It had been a long while now since her round and lovely face offered that expression.

Without any hesitation, Rebecca grabbed Mathias by the hand and led him toward the swelling crowd.

“If I could...if I could only touch the hem of His garment, I would be made whole,” she said to Mathias.

Rebecca and Mathias wormed their way through the crowd until they could see the young man said to be Jesus. He was addressing the crowd. The silence was deafening. Rebecca edged closer, not realizing that she was no longer holding Mathias’ hand.

Somehow, she had lost him in the crowd.

“God is on my side,” Rebecca told herself because she was getting closer and closer...and closer.

“If I could...,” she kept telling herself.

All the heads were turned in one direction, so people in the crowd didn’t bother to see who was stepping on a toe pushing out of a sandal, or a shoulder rubbing against another. Rebecca took advantage of that opportunity to reach within touching distance of this simple-looking young man smiling with His audience and speaking with so much confidence.

Rebecca made a step, then another, and another. As Rebecca did, her outstretched hand guided her toward her target.

“If I could...,” she mumbled to herself. “If I could...,” she said a little louder. A man beside her looked up into Rebecca’s face as if to ask what she was doing so close to the Son of God.

“One more step,” she told herself, “and this wretched blood problem will disappear from my body.” And Rebecca did just that. She felt her fingers as they touched His white silky garment.

Instantaneously, something happened that Rebecca could not explain. Somehow, she felt different, very different, and most of all, she felt anew.

Suddenly, Jesus looked around. “Who touched me?” He asked calmly.

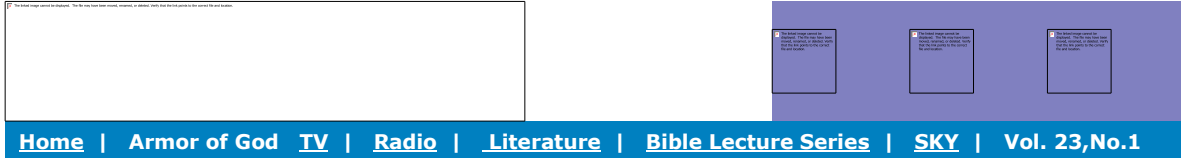
No one would own up to it. One of His followers, Peter, told Him it must have been the crowd pushing against Him.

“Somebody has touched me; for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me,” Jesus replied. Rebecca was too close to Him to deny it and so she admitted touching Him. “Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.”

“Th-thank you Master,” she managed to say with a smile.

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Questions

By Vance A. Stinson

What about Passover?

Q I am writing to find out some information about your church. I have some questions. [1] Regards to holy days, [do you observe a specific day] in which you drink wine and eat bread? Can you tell me what this day is called, and do you also do the washing of feet at this service. Also, do you have to be a baptized member in order to attend? [2] If you attend services, are you allowed to keep your friends who are not attending this church? Or is this against church rules?

K.R., Victoria, B.C., Canada

A Once each year, baptized members of the Church of God take a little piece of bread and small serving of wine as symbols of Christ's shed blood and broken body in the annual "Passover" service. We do it in the evening of the fourteenth day of the Hebrew month of Nisan (March-April), which is the night Christ gave His disciples bread and wine and instructed them concerning the commemoration of His death. In addition to taking the bread and wine as emblems of Christ's body and blood, we follow Christ's example by washing each other's feet. Anyone can attend the service, but only baptized persons can partake of the bread and wine. (This year we will be commemorating Christ's self-sacrifice on the evening of March 26.) Read Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; John 13:1-17; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29.

2) Not only can members of the Church of God International continue friendships with non-members, they are encouraged to do so, and may invite them to attend church with them any time they wish. However, if a friendship tends to lead to sinful activity, or even the temptation to sin, the converted person should establish clearly defined boundaries for the friendship in order to prevent the likelihood of falling into sin. In some cases, it may be necessary to completely break off certain relationships.

The Feast of Tabernacles

Seven Days, or Eight?

Q I have some questions: 1) Concerning the Feast of Tabernacles, how is it this is eight days? I thought when Jesus stood up on the last great day that meant the seventh day of the feast. If not, how does the eighth day come in?

2) If only the few who qualify to rule with Christ are changed or resurrected, where does this fit or leave people like [the person described in] 1 Corinthians 5:5? Was this man called of God? If he had been, then it looks like God is giving him a second chance, which I thought would not be the case. I understand he will be in the second resurrection.

3) To whom does Luke 12:47-48 pertain to, and also 1 Corinthians 3:13-15? First Corinthians 3:13-15 seems to disqualify him from the first resurrection, but he would automatically be saved in the second resurrection.

B.J., Winnfield, LA

A) The Feast of Tabernacles lasts seven days (Leviticus 23:34). The "Eighth Day," or day immediately following the Feast of Tabernacles, is also a holy day (verse 36; see also verse 39). While the "Eighth Day" (or "Last Great Day," as we call it) is technically the day following the Feast of Tabernacles, it is a part of the last festival of the year. It is related to, and a part of, Tabernacles in much the same way the Days of Unleavened Bread are related to, and a part of, the Passover.

2) The incestuous man of 1 Corinthians 5 was to be excommunicated in order to help bring him to repentance. If the excommunication has the desired effect of producing repentance, then the man's spirit will be saved "in the day of the Lord Jesus" (verse 5). This verse does not mean that the man will have a "second chance" in the second resurrection.

3) The point of Luke 12:47-48 is that the punishment sinners receive from the Lord will match their sins. For some, this will mean chastisement leading to repentance. For the incorrigibly wicked, it will mean death in the lake of fire. First Corinthians 3:13-15 is speaking of rewards for works, and pertains only to the saved. Some of a Christian's work may be "burned up" "proven useless" when it is tested, but the person himself will not be destroyed. He will simply not be rewarded for the worthless work. His reward (different from salvation itself) will be for his good work.

Two Faiths?

Q I would like for someone in Tyler to consider a sermon on the two faiths that seem to

be at work during the days of Abraham. God called Abraham out of his father's land, away from his father's religion, to seek and serve the one true God.

~~~~~Salem (now Jerusalem) was ruled by the King/Priest Melchizedek who the apostle Paul spoke righteously about stating that Jesus was now our Priest/King in the order of Melchizedek who had no end of days. My conjecture is that if Melchizedek was a righteous Priest/King why didn't God simply tell Abraham to leave his father's house and faith and seek the ways of the people of Salem?

~~~~~Apparently there were two faiths at work while serving the one true God. I stand to be corrected and welcome that correction. I only wish that someone would simply consider the faith of Abraham and how it differed from the people of Salem. I have decided to begin a personal Bible study on this subject for myself simply because I feel that there is something there for me to see. If you find this subject to be one that you have studied yet have found it to be of limited worth to the church please let me know. I'm still going to do my own study on this subject but I would like your feedback.

D.P.B., Springfield, MO

A The Old Testament gives us little information about Melchizedek. We only know (from the OT text) that he was "king of Salem" • and "priest of the Most High God." • From history, we know that in the time of Abraham there were many king-priests, or men who governed their communities and provided priestly services as well. We would most likely classify most king-priests as "pagan," • as they probably represented the various agricultural and fertility gods and goddesses of antiquity. Melchizedek, however, was "priest of the Most High God." • This designation indicates that he was not just another pagan priest, but shared the faith of Abraham in that he served the same God "the one true God" that Abraham served. Since Melchizedek was a priest, it seems evident that he must have served a community of God-fearing men and women. Abraham was chosen for a special purpose, no question about that, but there is no reason to assume that he was the only God-fearing person alive at that time.

~~~~~The promise given to Abraham contained (in embryonic form) the Messianic hope (see Genesis 12:1-3; 13:15; cf. Galatians 3:16). Since Messiah's priesthood is "after the order of Melchizedek," • it might just as well be said that the people Melchizedek served also had (at the heart of their faith) a certain Messianic hope (though far from fully developed). It seems to me that the faith Abraham professed was not fundamentally different from the faith of the people of Salem.

**Can One Lose His Salvation?  
Which is the Correct  
Baptismal "Formula" • ?**

**Q** In regards to [the question of whether] a saved person [can] lose the salvation God has so graciously granted him: if so, how can it happen? I would like to share my findings

from the Scripture with youâ€.

ÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂOnce the gospel is proposed to men by the preaching of the apostles, the former have a choice that will determine their lot: salvation or doomâ€life or death. Those who believe and confess, their faith [will] save [them]â€having been sealed besides by baptism, an actual experience of salvationâ€.

ÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂGod saves them purely of mercy without considering their worksâ€by means of graceâ€giving them the Holy Spiritâ€from this moment. The Christian must guard faithfully the Word which can save his soulâ€[and] must nourish his faith through acquaintance with the Scriptureâ€.And he must make it bear fruit in Godâ€™s workâ€[and] must labor with fear and trembling to accomplish his salvationâ€.This supposes a constant exercise of salutary virtuesâ€, thanks to which he will grow with regard to his salvationâ€No negligence is permittedâ€.

ÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂPS: â€I have a question. There is a man at the prison who is saying that those who have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not saved, saying that the confession in Romans 10:9 says you shall be saved. [He says] the correct way [is revealed in] Acts 2:38, where Peter said unto them, â€Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Also, Acts 19:1â€5.

A I agree with your conclusions on the question of whether a saved person can lose his salvation. No matter how many good works we have to our credit, we can do nothing that will cause God to owe salvation to us. We are saved by graceâ€”unmerited favorâ€”and can never claim credit for having earned this state of justification through our own efforts. However, God does not remove the free will of those who have received His free gift. They can still throw it away if they so choose.

ÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂOn your question about baptism, it is a mistake to assume that Acts 2:38, Acts 19:1â€5, or Romans 10:9 contain a baptism â€formula.â€ • Jesus said, â€Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spiritâ€â€ (Matthew 28:19). Baptizing someone â€in the name of the Fatherâ€Sonâ€Holy Spiritâ€ • is baptizing him or her â€in the name of Jesus.â€ • The expression â€in the name ofâ€ • means â€by the authority of.â€ • Jesus derives His authority from the Father, and exercises that authority through the Holy Spirit. There are not two or three different authorities, but only one. The authority (power) of Jesus is the authority granted by the Father and carried out on earth through the Holy Spirit. It is appropriate, therefore, to use the words of Matthew 28:19 in the baptism ceremony. It means the same thing as â€in the name of Jesus.â€ •

ÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂÂFurther, the patristic evidence indicatesâ€”contrary to the claims of some â€Jesus onlyâ€ • advocatesâ€”that Matthew 28:19 was not a later addition, but belongs in the text. If we recognize the validity of this passage, then the issue of whether baptizing â€in the name of the Fatherâ€Sonâ€Holy Spiritâ€ • is permissible is settled by Jesus.

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## Smelling Good But Feeling Bad Synthetic Perfumes, Colognes, and Scents Are Turning Up Noses

Editorâ€™s Note: The following article was submitted by Vivian Rust, a church member who suffers greatly from Multiple Chemical Sensitivity. Since many of our readers know Mrs. Rust, we are reprinting this article from E Magazine ([www.emagazine.com](http://www.emagazine.com)) as an educational service. Used by permission.

By Damon Franz

and Holly Prall

Have you ever wondered which personal fragrance or perfume will make you the most attractive? If the person youâ€™re trying to attract happens to be a member of the Sierra Club, then the answer is probably none. In California last year, the clubâ€™s San Francisco and Loma Prieta chapters resolved to â€œtake action to discourage the use of fragrance products in all public places,â€• and advocate that this position become a regional and national policy.

â€œWhy does the Sierra Club care about how you scent your body or which fabric softener you use? Well, quite literally, these products are making people



sick.

For many, the use of fragrances like perfume, cologne, after-shave, or scented lotion is a personal choice affecting only the user. But the phrase “personal fragrance” can be seen as a contradiction in terms. Fragrances are, by definition, volatile: that is, they quickly become airborne. Once they’re aloft, they’re easily inhaled by others, and this can create a health problem akin to second-hand cigarette smoke.

## Breathing hard

Exposure to fragrance chemicals may result in dangerous and painful asthma attacks in which muscle spasms, fluid, and excess mucous obstruct the airways. Such attacks afflict about 14.6 million Americans and kill an estimated 5,000 each year, according to the American Lung Association. The Louisiana State Medical Center found that one out of every five of these asthmatics experiences an attack as a result of exposure to perfume.

Even those with no asthmatic history may begin to have attacks after becoming “sensitized” to the chemicals in fragranced products. Betty Bridges, a registered nurse and founder of the Fragranced Products Information Network, was a healthy working mother who had never had an asthma attack before 1988, when her employer switched to a cleaning product with added fragrance. “Almost as soon as I sprayed the solution I couldn’t breathe,” she says. “After I ran outside to get some fresh air I could breathe again, but I was wheezing badly.” Shortly after the initial attack, Betty began to have reactions to perfumes and other scented products.

People afflicted with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) suffer a host of crippling symptoms upon exposure to low-level chemicals that most people can tolerate. Like Betty Bridges’ asthma, MCS can begin at any point in an otherwise healthy person’s life. The air freshener that smells great today can make you nauseous tomorrow. And the perfume that makes you feel sexy may be giving the person next to you a migraine headache. Sound unlikely? The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) doesn’t think so. In 1991, it sponsored a study to identify the compounds found in many fragrance products, in part because “chemical sensitivity may be widespread enough to have significant effects on the country’s productivity and health care costs.”

Asthmatics and MCS sufferers aren’t the only ones feeling bad about the chemicals in fragrance products. In 1986, The French journal *Ann Dermatol Venereol* reported that “perfumes are the most common cause of skin allergy to cosmetic products.”

The same year, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) listed fragrances as a category of chemicals that should be given high priority for neurotoxic

testing.

Although the FDA has not yet taken NAS's suggestion, Anderson Laboratories has. Anderson is an independent testing lab that specializes in biological effects of polluted indoor air. The lab's president, Dr. Rosalind Anderson, reported in the Archives of Environmental Health that mice experience neurotoxic effects as well as sensory and pulmonary irritation and airflow limitation in response to fragrance exposure. Anderson says that her findings, in addition to human reports of adverse effects, are significant enough for her to advocate that people stop using fragrances. "We think that, even if you don't find yourself to be sensitive to fragrances now, you may be later on," says Anderson. "We also don't know if there is such a thing as silent lung damage."

If you like scents so much that you're willing to risk your health and those around you to wear them, you probably shouldn't move to Halifax, Nova Scotia. The city recently established fragrance-free policies in most of its public offices and many private businesses. And Halifax isn't the only city to make a public issue out of such secondhand health hazards. In Marin County, California, restaurant patrons are able to choose fragrance-free seating, thanks to the efforts of the Citizens for a Toxic-Free Marin.

## **A chemical soup**

Since people have been using perfumes for hundreds of years, it's reasonable to wonder why the problem has surfaced only recently. But until the twentieth century, perfumes were made from natural ingredients derived directly from plants and animals. As fragrances became cheaper and more widespread, they also became more synthetic. The National Academy of Sciences reports that 95 percent of chemicals used in fragrances today are synthetic compounds derived from petroleum, including known toxins capable of causing cancer, birth defects, central nervous system disorders, and allergic reactions.

But surely, you might say, if there really was a significant health risk created by perfumes and other scented products, the federal government would protect people by attempting to regulate them, right? Guess again. Since the cosmetics industry is self-regulated, it isn't required to register its formulations, test results, or consumer complaints with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). "The cosmetics manufacturers aren't required to submit safety data to the FDA, so we don't really know what sorts of tests they run," says Wayne Stevenson of the FDA Cosmetics Registration Section. "When they run tests, they keep the results in their own files. They don't share the information with the FDA."

Human health risks aren't the only problem. Fragrances that are washed down the drain from laundry, shower, and household cleaning activities may not be removed in waste treatment plants, and so they can stick around to contaminate animals and ecosystems. Synthetic musk chemicals in particular may be ecologically

harmful due to their high bio-accumulation potential in animals and in the aquatic environment, their general persistence, dermal permeability, and insufficiently assessed toxicity," says Dr. Gerhard Rimkus of the Food and Veterinary Institute in Neumunster, Germany.

Next time you reach for that bottle of perfume or cologne, remember that you're using powerful chemicals regulated solely by the industry that sells them. Remember that just because they don't affect you now doesn't mean they won't affect someone in line next to you, or that you'll always be immune to their effects. Think about where they might end up once they've disappeared down the drain. If you do have a reaction to scented products, take action. Complain not only to the producer of the product, but also to the FDA (for cosmetics) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (for other fragranced products).

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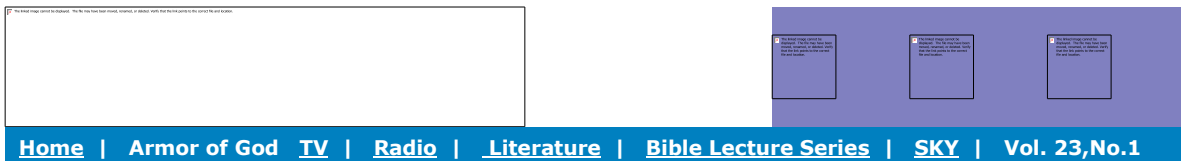
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## The Spirit of Compromise

Show me a person who has fallen away from Jesus Christ and I'll show you a person who began making compromises in his or her life! Compromise after compromise after compromise until the inevitable end result—the eventual falling away from the truth.

By Lloyd W. Cary

We have all experienced it. We hear a sermon or a tape and feel inspired and motivated by it. Or perhaps we have come back from the feast galvanized, encouraged, and excited. We see the big picture and want to change our lives for the better. Wouldn't it be

great if we could keep this attitude all year round? And yet, as time goes by, we inevitably find ourselves slipping up a bit here and a bit there, and by the time Passover is here, we will need to begin our spiritual housecleaning all over again.

Why? How do we backslide? How do we succumb to the temptation to sin? What is the mechanism through which temptations come, and why do we start giving in to them? How can we recognize this process, and is there anything we can do to prevent it from happening—or at least slow down the process so that we can make some gains and not have to start over year after year?

Here's how the temptation comes. We read in 1 John 2:16, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." • These three things are the "windows of opportunity" through which temptation comes. Plus, we must not forget the influence of Satan and his minions (Revelation 12:9). Notwithstanding, we must not dismiss our cooperative part in our own spiritual degradation.

### **The message of the world**

The message of the world is, "Relax; take it easy; don't make waves. Don't be a fanatic. After all, God understands." • The subliminal message is that you can "have your cake and eat it too," with "one foot in the church and one foot in the world." • "Find a way to have it all." • "Don't sweat the small stuff." • These are just a few of the countless messages flashed before Christians today. Then, when we slip up and sin, we feel let down and discouraged. We want to live effective Christian lives—and yet the seducement of living life "on the edge" is still there. Temptation. Idolatry. Immorality. Adultery. Our minds are repeatedly bombarded with hundreds of ways to shave a little off here, a little there—until biblical truth and values are completely eroded. With each small step, each subtle compromise, we're drawn further from Christ—and closer to the abyss of spiritual degradation. Then there is that last little push—that last compromise—the Great Compromise—the one we cannot pull out of.

Let us analyze our dilemma. When does the world begin to pull you down? How does it happen? I, personally, know of no one who was a strong, dynamic, doing-the-work Christian one day—and fell away the next day. It happens—by degrees: as one is converted step by step, so one falls away by degrees, step by step. The common denominator: compromise.

### **Compromise: The Christian's deadliest enemy**

When we break down the word compromise, we have "com," which means "with; together; combine," with "promise." • Compromise means "with promise." • Compromise is the art of dividing a cake in such a way that everybody believes he has the biggest piece. It means, "If you'll

scratch my back, Iâ€™ll scratch yoursâ€™”I promise.â€• Sin always starts out as  
â€œfunâ€•â€”it has the promise of a temporal reward. It is a give-and-take tradeoff, a  
deal, or a bargain. Compromise is cautioned against in 2 Corinthians 6:14: â€œBe ye not  
unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with  
unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?â€•

â€”Society has conditioned us to believe compromise is a good  
thing. And it can beâ€”for example, in company/union negotiationsâ€”but not in the  
Christian life. Compromise is the Christianâ€™s deadliest enemyâ€”it is clever, seductive,  
subtle, deadlyâ€”it is one of the most effective tactics ever invented by the devil for use in  
warfare against Christians. The collapse of character begins on â€œCompromise  
Corner.â€• Like a cancer of the spirit, Christian compromise rubs, grinds, and erodes  
away our resolve until we are weak and can no longer stand. It is so e-a-s-y to take the  
course of â€œChristianity Lite,â€• to take the quick-fix, and to dwell only upon  
â€œsmooth thingsâ€• (Isaiah 30:10). Through laxity, we seek out a â€œuser-friendlyâ€•  
God who will not make life-changing demands upon us. We find out, too late, that  
compromised truth is not truth at all, but a satanic deception.

â€”Satan seldom needs to tempt Christians to go out and commit  
the one gigantic, hideous sin that will â€œtake us out.â€• Instead, he knows from  
experience that it is much more effective to convince us to lower our guard, little by  
littleâ€”compromise by deceptive compromiseâ€”so gradually we hardly recognize it  
when we stumble. Our shield of faith is lowered so far we cannot see where our feet are  
going. Instead of falling headlong into a pattern of sin, we drop our standards one incident  
at a time until, through our shortsightedness, our integrity is impaired, our character is  
endangered, and our relationship with God is destroyed.

â€”Consider the account of a mammoth redwood tree that had  
survived some 400 years in one of Americaâ€™s national forests. This massive tree  
survived 14 lightning strikes, numerous earthquakes, storms, floods, and other natural  
disasters. Yet, one day, with no apparent warning, this massive, towering old tree came  
crashing to the groundâ€”not due to lightning, a storm, or some overzealous lumberjack,  
but by thousands of tiny beetles that had begun eating away at its life fibers, weakening its  
mighty bulk from the inside. In much the same way, the devil tries to bring down  
Christians through a steady drone of small, seemingly insignificant temptationsâ€”through  
a series of compromises.

â€”Show me a person who has fallen away from their walk with  
Jesus Christ, and Iâ€™ll show you a person who began making compromises in his or her  
life! Compromise after compromise after compromiseâ€”until the inevitable end  
resultâ€”the eventual falling away from the truth.

## **The Thrill of Temptation**

â€”I was greatly saddened recently when I learned of a friend who  
had recently fallen away from the truth. He had been warned against â€œdabblingâ€• in

the religious works, philosophies, and “new truths” of others. But he would not heed. He thought he could get away with it. “They can’t fool me,” he thought. “I just want to hear what they have to say. I’m strong. I’ll show them who’s right.” He ignored the plain scripture of 2 John 1:10: “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house [into your mind], neither bid him God speed.” My friend didn’t make it. He now blatantly denies Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. His small compromises became his great compromise—the one from which he could not recover.

As we look at the church today, it is important to realize that wherever God is working, the devil is also present to oppose. He will tell you that it is not “politically correct” to compromise. He will appeal to your sense of “fairness.” “You read my stuff, and I’ll read yours. You come to my church, and I’ll come to yours. If you think you have the truth, what have you got to be afraid of? Let’s strike a deal. Let’s work out a compromise!” And so the door to jeopardy opens.

Â Poison plus no poison equals what? Poison! Would you drink just a “little” arsenic with a glass of tomato juice? Will you take in just a “little” false doctrine out of a sense of fairness, just to placate others or just to see their “point of view”? First Corinthians 5:6 cautions, “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” Do we really believe this? If so, why do we play with compromise? True doctrine is so intricately interrelated that one doctrine fits in with and aids in the understanding of all the others. When one part of one’s understanding becomes altered, others are also affected. This is the “behind the scenes” danger of compromise. “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psalm 11:3).

Â First Corinthians 10:12 says, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed why? lest he fall.” Compromise is subtle. It’s dangerous—even deadly! It is candy-coated sin. To entice us to compromise, the devil must nearly always work in secrecy. The serpent confronted Eve when God was not present and deceived her into compromising with what God said. A “back-door” method, coupled with pride, is to work with someone who has his personal idea babies cloaked as “new truths.” Once this “new understanding” is conceived and brought to fruition, he feels he would be “compromising” if he fellowships with someone who does not have his understanding, and so pride and vanity will have its way. Yes, Satan is old and clever and has a brand of deception for everyone, and he does not care into which ditch you fall. Beware that no man deceives you—or that you do not deceive yourself! Once we begin to identify and understand how compromise works, it can change our spiritual lives for the better. The solution is to examine ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:28) continually and keep our antenna up “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Like the thrill of an amusement park, it seems there is an adrenaline rush or some kind of spine-tingling experience in seeing how close we can get

to the edge of a cliff without plunging over. How much better to stand afar off from the danger, the temptation, the sin! Most times, we do not intentionally, or with malice forethought, compromise with God's Word. We just do not see the dangers and as a result make the wrong choices—in effect, we listen to the wrong voice.

#### Four Vital Questions

~~~~~Though many would deny it, most of us know when we are compromising with the Truth. Don't we? When you sense that internal "warning bell" • going off—when you are nudged to compromise, to give in—just a little—stop! Stop dead and ask yourself the following questions. Write these down and memorize them.

~~~~~Does this compromise—this questionable activity—build me up spiritually? Or will it tear me down? Will it lead to still more and more compromises until—step by step—I am in deep spiritual trouble? (It is so much easier to stay out of trouble than to get out of trouble once we're in it!) How do you spend your time? For example, you have a choice as to whether to watch TV—or study God's Word. What is your choice, Christian? We all have the same amount of time, but how do we use it? Remember the computer motto: "Garbage in—garbage out." • Nature abhors a vacuum. If you do not fill your mind with God's thoughts, your mind will automatically be filled with ungodly thoughts (James 1:14). Compromise will take its deadly toll.

~~~~~Does this compromise—this temptation—bring me under its control? Will this activity—this pastime—become a habit that will be hard to break? Will it become an addiction I will have to fight? Will it become costly? Will it affect my health? How will this behavior affect my family and loved ones? What are its end-results? If others see me, will it adversely affect my testimony as a follower of Jesus Christ?

~~~~~Does this compromise—this borderline letting down—prick my conscience? "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" • (Romans 14:23). Ask yourself, "What would Jesus do?" • Do you know Him well enough to tell? Would Jesus look at what you are about to see; listen to what you are about to hear; speak what you are about to say; taste, drink, or smoke what you are about to partake of? We need to answer these questions truthfully and live accordingly.

~~~~~Could this compromise—this one-time indulgence—cause anyone else to stumble? If you are not a "closet Christian"—and we hope you are not (Matthew 5:15)—you are being watched. What do others see? Will your indulgence attract others to Christ—or repel them? "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" • (Matthew 18:6).

~~~~~One reason sin flourishes is that it is treated as a play-thing instead of a rattlesnake. We "play" with sin—tempting temptation—thinking it

won't bite. There is the story about the man who found a baby rattlesnake and raised it with loving care. One day, when it was grown, it bit him. The man staggered in disbelief. "How could you?" he asked. "I took you in; I raised you; I fed and cared for you. How dare you bite me?" "Why are you surprised?" hissed the viper. "You should have known better. After all you knew I was a snake, didn't you?"

So it is with sin (1 Corinthians 15:56)! If we succumb to the enticements and temptations of the world "if we compromise with God's law" we must take responsibility for it. Many wonder why they have problems, hang-ups, and trials in life, but have we ever considered that we do not reap in the same season in which we sow? "O that they were wise," God laments, "that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" (Deuteronomy 32:29). The mature believer realizes that we must never rest on our laurels; that there is always a l-o-n-g way to go. Sin is addictive "we must avoid that first compromise" or others will surely follow. The day we stop being built up in our faith is the day our faith begins breaking down. The spiritual termites begin gnawing away "the internal consequences of compromise" until we are weak and ready to fall. The best way not to go backward is to keep going forward. Remember, God can only bless you up to your last point of obedience because He cannot "He will not" bless you for disobedience. Let us not be content with what we once did for Christ. Let's not live in the past. Let us press forward, put on God's spiritual armor, take up our crosses daily, and follow Him (Matthew 16:24).

Remember Lamentations 3:22-23: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: Great is thy faithfulness." Yet, let us not tempt God. Let us move far from the edge of the cliff of sin. Let us renew our first love of the truth of God (Revelation 2:4).

Let us beware of the spirit of compromise.

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## Trust and Obey Essential Elements of Faith

By Richard W. Williams

Among the many biblical topics we have heard and read about, the subject of faith perhaps is near the top of the list. We hear stories of people with powerful faith. We hear of how important it is in facing life's problems. Let us take a few minutes and consider two aspects that not only define it but give us guidance in how to exercise our own faith and grow in it toward the perfection of Jesus Christ.

Close your eyes and begin to picture standing at a scenic overview. As far as the eye can see are picturesque mountains, valleys, lakes, and rivers. From behind a protective barricade, you peer over a cliff and look virtually straight down for hundreds of feet into the canyon below. The view is breathtaking. Suddenly, you feel the ground beneath your feet move. You turn to run, but the earth beneath your feet gives way and you begin to fall. Desperately, you reach out to grasp for something to hold to. Your fingers dig and your feet scrap against the dirt and rock searching for something to stop the downward descent. Then one hand latches onto what feels like the edge of an embedded rock that is solid and instinctively the other hand also grabs it. You feel around carefully with your feet until you find another rock protruding out to gain additional support.

You scream out in desperation, "Help! Somebody help me!" • Your eyes turn heavenward, then close while you fervently pray, "Oh God, save me!" • Without some help it is only a matter of time before you fall to your death.

Then a voice calls out from above your head, "Here, grab my hand."

You open your eyes and slowly look upwards. You can barely see a hand reaching down toward you. You realize that if you let go to grab the hand, you probably will not be able to get another grasp on the rocky edge that you are clinging to. In just a second or two what you do will either save your life or end it.

In resolving this dilemma you must deal with two elements. One, is the voice and hand really there or just your imagination? Okay so you believe that it is real. Now what? Just knowing that a hand is there is not going to do you any good unless you do something about it. Now the second element comes to play. For that hand to intervene and save your life you must obey the command and actually reach out and grab it. Be assured that it is imperative that once you grab that hand you do not let go. However,

as the pull begins you feel your grip is slipping and question whether you can hold on long enough.

~~~~~The voice says, "Squeeze tighter; reach out with your other hand and pull and push with your feet on every solid rock you find. Hang on and keep climbing; you can make it." •

~~~~~You realize that to make it all the way to safe ground, you have to do your part—even though the hand is very strong by itself. You must listen and do other things the voice commands you to do besides simply holding the hand in order to reach safety.

~~~~~This illustration demonstrates two very important elements of faith. For you to reach up to that hand, you will need faith. First, you will have to trust that the person reaching down will have the strength initially to keep you from falling once you let go of the "world." • Second, once you grab hold of that hand, you must hold on and do whatever the one who extended the hand tells you to do. If that voice says be still you must be still. If it says grab the hand with your other hand, you must hold on with both hands. If it says use the other hand to help pull on rocks or roots or anything protruding from the side of the mountain, you simply do what is commanded. If you do not do what you are told you will hinder the rescue and possibly not make it to safety.

~~~~~One of the things that Jesus pondered before being killed involved faith. He had lived over thirty-three years on this earth, and had seen how mankind was living. He wondered, "When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" • (Luke 18:8).

~~~~~In the world today, even more so than in the days that Jesus walked this earth, a solid faith that is based on trust and obedience is becoming harder to find. Yet, these elements are essential to a living active faith that will save our lives in every situation and circumstance we will ever face. We must know whom to trust in heaven and on earth and understand what we are to obey.

~~~~~Hebrews 11:6 relates these two elements of faith: "But without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." •

~~~~~You must believe that God is. This belief is more than just knowing or thinking about God. It involves trust. Diligently seeking God is not just having a casual acquaintance. It involves a lifelong commitment to obey Him. It also involves trusting those whom God uses and sends to guide His people.

~~~~~Obedience is the second phase that puts that trust into action. You learn from God's Word in every manner possible how to obey His laws and walk in His way. But, it also means you get involved with others to help, to serve, to work with them in accomplishing God's will on this earth. This means you try the spirits,

evaluate the fruits, determine who is truly following the Lord and is being used by God's Spirit to shepherd His people. Once you find them together you have strength and determine a purpose that God has called you to complete.

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them • (Matthew 18:20).

Working with others requires cooperation and it requires leadership. There are many directions and things to be done and it takes a leader to narrow a group's focus. That focus determines what the group can accomplish immediately and enables it to develop a vision for future growth and development. Leaders must listen to a multitude of counselors and abide by the Word of God while making decisions that will affect others. We must follow and support them as long as they and their directions are godly. Some do not like the idea of following the lead of other men and want power and glory for themselves. Such do not realize that truly godly leaders are not ones who desire prestige and power for what it can do for them. They humbly accept God's direction to lead, and they do this in the spirit and practice of being a servant.

But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted • (Matthew 23:11-12). But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many • (Matthew 20:25-28).

Trust is an active belief. It requires action. To please God, you must believe/trust Him. With care we extend this trust to those whom God is truly working through.

Obedience is an active commitment that puts that trust into action. Our obedience to God is a continuous never-stopping effort to refine and become more perfect to obey Him. Our submission to those whom God has selected to lead His people should only stop if we determine that they are not themselves being obedient to God or are teaching unbiblical doctrines. Should there ever be a conflict between obeying God versus obeying any man, government, or other organization of man, God's Word tells us what we must do.

But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men • (Acts 5:29).

To please God it takes a faith that is composed of the elements of trust and obedience. Both require commitment to be solid. There is a difference between commitment and involvement. Consider the following example to explain the difference:

~~~~~In November each year most of us in the USA celebrate Thanksgiving Day. Let us say we visit a friend who lives on a farm. We are spending the week of this holiday with his family. This farm has the regular selection of livestock along with barns, out buildings, pens, and fields. While sitting out on the front porch, we see a number of chickens foraging about and we notice two large beautiful Tom turkeys. They are strutting about, their feathers all ruffled up and tail feathers spread out. Being near Thanksgiving Day this sight makes this visit even more special.

~~~~~On Thanksgiving Day, one of the turkeys will still be strutting about adding beauty to the occasion. The other will have been prepared and be on a platter on the table in the dining room. The turkey outside is involved in Thanksgiving Day, but the turkey on the platter is committed to Thanksgiving Day.

~~~~~Trust and obedience is putting your life on the line, and that takes faith. Commitment is more than just involvement, it means keeping your life on the line, and that builds a solid faith that can never be shaken or destroyed.

~~~~~Hebrews 11 is called the "faith chapter." • It lists men and women who trusted and obeyed God, and committed their lives to Him. Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, and many more demonstrated this kind of faith. The Bible says these people trusted God and those whom He sent. They obeyed God and zealously committed their lives to serve Him in all that He commanded.

~~~~~God wants each one of us to have faith, strong faith. This takes exercise. God has set within our normal life circumstances that are meant to build faith. He has given us parents, spouses, children, friends, His church, and Himself. He expects us to develop and maintain these relationships. This cannot be done without faith. We must learn to trust others and commit to our relationship with them, obeying all the laws that God has given to guide us.

~~~~~This world is full of mistrust and disobedience, which extends into a general lack of commitment to anyone or anything. Couples just live together rather than marry. Half of marriages end in divorce. Children are being abused and neglected. Children are killing their parents. Satan wants us to doubt, be suspicious, mistrust others. He does not want us to obey God's laws or take directions from others, which helps us maintain our commitments. If we make promises or commitments, he wants us to break them. Don't listen to Satan. Don't follow his ways.

~~~~~God help us to realize that if we cannot trust others, if we cannot obey laws and keep commitments, we will not have a living and abiding faith. We will not be able to please God.

~~~~~The bottom line in having trust is whether we really believe in God. Do we really know that He not only exists but also is directly involved with us personally?

~~~~~Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows • (Matthew 10:29-31). ~~~~~Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ~~~~~The Lord knows those who are His, and, ~~~~~Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity • (2 Timothy 2:19).

~~~~~Do we really trust our life into His hands? Are there some areas of our life that we are holding back on? Satan tries to build fear about others and things we may be exposed to or things about us that might harm us to weaken us and keep us from growing in faith. This kind of fear is absolutely the opposite of the faith God wants to see in us.

~~~~~And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love • (1 John 4:16-18).

~~~~~If we have fears we need to grow in faith so God can perfect us. This applies to us all. Everyone one of us has fears. Some fear heights, some fear snakes, some fear authorities, some fear loneliness, some fear crowds, some fear close surroundings, and so on. Some of these fears are inconveniences or trivial matters that do not generally obstruct our lives. But some do interfere and prevent us from developing or doing some things that would help us grow spiritually. By continually yielding to this fear we are saying we do not fully trust God.

~~~~~Can we not realize that these fears are opportunities? God will help us overcome each of these fears if we face them rather than run away or hide from them. As we remove each of our fears we become ever stronger in the faith. This is something each of us must do in order to prepare to survive what will happen in the end time if we are alive when prophesied events of cataclysmic proportions begin to take place around us.

~~~~~Some may feel their little fears are not all that big a deal and really do not matter in their faith in God. Let us consider this fact: We all have read or heard about the trials and tribulation that will come on the earth in the end time. Even in our darkest imagination we cannot really grasp the horrors that will happen all around every single person alive on this planet. Even though we can be assured of God's protection to survive we must understand a few things. God's Word says that we may have to flee from one city to another.

~~~~~When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son

of Man comes (Matthew 10:23).

How can we flee if we have not overcome our fear of flying, traveling by boat, close confining spaces, and so on? Don't think God will provide a stretch limousine or chariot of fire to transport us when the time to flee comes. While God promises to protect us, think about what might be all around us.

You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, Nor of the arrow that flies by day, Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; But it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, And see the reward of the wicked • (Psalm 91:5-8).

If God so wills that we remain alive during this time we may have to live in dwellings or walk a path that at times has snakes, rats, spiders, and other creatures crawling about. Even though death walks the streets, we will still have a work to do no matter what conditions we have to live in or road we must travel down. Any fears we have not overcome concerning anything we face in this world will be used by Satan to try to stop us from reaching someone God wants us to reach with His truth to save them from the Antichrist, the things of the world, and Satan.

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" • (Mark 16:15-18).

If we develop the faith of Jesus Christ by trusting and obeying God no peril on this earth can harm us or stop us from doing, going, and accomplishing a work that will bring His saving truth and power to others. Some of us will build that kind of faith. They will no longer let any fear or weakness shackle them. The book of Revelation calls them "overcomers." Overcomers will lay hands on the sick and the sick will recover. They will walk through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil.

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father • (John 14:12).

Think about the things that Jesus Christ did while here on earth. Is it possible that some of us will do the same or even greater acts of faith than He did? How far can we go with this kind of faith? I don't think it is inconceivable that some of us, in accomplishing God's will, may walk through fire and water, stop raging storms, silence demonic spirits, and even raise the dead back to life. Look at the life of Paul. He really did believe and stepped out in faith facing many perils. He was convinced

that God would not let him be seriously harmed until he finished the work and purpose God had for his life. Can we develop that kind of faith? Can we truly step out in faith saying the same thing Paul said? “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” • (Philippians 4:13).

“All things really means all things. It means nothing, absolutely nothing, can stop us or harm us until we have finished our life’s purpose. It means that if we suffer any loss or injury God will directly help us and even this will be for a purpose that will bring glory and honor to His name. No we will not take foolish chances or tempt God. But, we will begin to step out in faith, overcoming each and every fear and weakness that binds us today. We will no longer let them stop us from doing anything or going anywhere that will help us serve Him and the brethren and join with others to do a great work for our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

“Time is running out. Can we not understand that we simply cannot afford to cater to anything that will hinder us in our walk of faith? The longer we wait the stronger our fears and weaknesses become.

“The only thing we should ever fear is doing anything, going anywhere, or keeping continued company with those who are actively working to try to separate us from God.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever” • (Psalms 111:10). “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” • (Matthew 10:28).

“Notice along with the proper fear of God is obedience to His commandments. But, let us realize that with a true and abiding faith, which is expressed by our complete trust in God, we should fear nothing on earth. As long as we have any fear concerning anything on earth we know we still have much to learn, much to overcome, and much to grow toward becoming like Jesus Christ. Read Romans 8:35-39 and be assured that nothing can separate us from God:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” •

“Growing in faith means to stop worrying about things beyond our control. God knows what we need. If we continually worry and fret about the future and essential needs this is like saying to God, “I really do not believe in you or trust

you. • Can we not cry out like the father of the child that was possessed by a demon:

Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."™ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" • (Mark 9:23-24).

Let us cry out every day of our lives to God for help and determine to face and overcome all our fears. Let us learn to truly trust God and stop worrying. Let us begin to step out in faith. Sure we might not be successful the first time or even the second or third time we face such fears. But, if we do not give up on God, each time we will be able to go a little further until these fears no longer bind us. There may be some things we will never like or enjoy, but we will be able to go anywhere or do anything we need to do to be used by God. He and others need us or there is an opportunity for us to grow spiritually. Working with our fears is just like working with our weaknesses. Both are carnal physical and emotional baggage weighing us down, slowing us, hindering us, misdirecting us, keeping us from serving God with our whole heart, mind, and soul, with all our might.

In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood • 1 (Hebrews 12:4 NRSV).

Can we not begin to see that the importance of trusting and obeying God is absolutely essential to growth in faith? Exercising our faith means being involved with others, for faith does involve works and we can accomplish much more by working with others. We need all aspects of faith in dealing with others. As we learn to trust others we build this aspect of our faith, which in turn helps us better trust God. Trusting others is not always an easy thing to do. It is much harder if we have the wrong attitude concerning our obedience to God's laws.

Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them • (Psalms 119:165 KJV).

The word offend in this verse is translated "because to stumble" • in many other translations. These words reveal two aspects of keeping God's law. Some keep God's law to keep from being punished for breaking it. With this attitude they resent the life God commands them to live. They see all the glamour and "fun" • others seem to be enjoying and feel deprived by having to live a life devoid of that kind of pleasure in obedience to God's laws. May God help us if this is our attitude! In time, such a person may become insensitive to the convicting power of God's Spirit. If this happens, and the person continues in a state of indifference, God will eventually withdraw His Spirit. As long as God's Spirit is convicting us there is an opportunity to change our ways and attitude and truly repent with godly sorrow. We must totally commit our whole body and mind to obeying God and develop a true love for His laws and truth. We must not only say goodbye forever to the past way of disobedience but we must develop a righteous hate for such ungodliness.

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth • (Colossians 3:5-8).

A person who truly loves God's law sees sinful pleasure and wrongful conduct for what they really are. They shun this behavior and places where it is promoted; they realize the true misery, pain, and death that such activities eventually bring. They experience the joy of not being enslaved to such passions and bad habits. Yes, they too occasionally stumble and sin but their recovery is more sure and speedy. They do not try to justify their wrong behavior. They know it leads to death. They are humbled and thankful for Jesus Christ who has made a way for us to be reconciled to God.

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked • (1 John 2:1-6).

God's Word tells us that the more perfectly we keep His laws the less we will become upset by others. Those easily offended are those who are lacking in obedience to God. God only knows what sins are enslaving them. It is not for us to judge others but this understanding is for our own good. If we find others and circumstances constantly causing us to be offended then we must examine our own lives to see where we are compromising and failing to properly keep God's holy laws. Perhaps we are sinning within our minds by coveting or lusting. We have already gone beyond the stage of being tempted and now we are dwelling on these things. Let us go before God in heart-rending prayer for His forgiveness and strength before these sins take shape in our actions as well as our minds. When these wrong thoughts take action they begin to hurt others by injuring them, depriving them of something, or involving them in a sinful action as well. To stop a fire you must stop the source of its fuel. Determine and deal with the cause, and the effect will virtually take care of itself. The same is true for sin. Stop the sinful thought process and you prevent the sinful action.

Growing in faith means that we must keep our commitments. Be loyal, support, and care about our family, friends, our church, our God. We must not just sit on a fence, one foot in and the other out. We need to get in the middle of things. Show that we care. We must go beyond involvement. Like the turkey on the table, we must be totally dedicated and committed.

Let us from this day forward begin to develop these essential

elements of faith. It will save us and help us to live a productive life in service to others and our God.

~~~~~For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ~The just shall live by faith~ • (Romans 1:17).

~~~~~Each time we view a scenic panorama let~s remember the illustration about the cliff. Let us then examine our lives to determine if we are growing in our trust and obedience of God. If we find progress then we can be assured that we are growing in faith.

~~~~~What will be the answer to Jesus~ question? ~When I return to this world to establish my kingdom,~ • He asks, ~will I find any faith left on earth?~ • (Luke 18:8, paraphrased). He will if we can say as the apostle Paul did in 2 Timothy 1:12: ~I know whom I have believed [by faith, I have fully trusted God and have committed my life to Him], and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day [by faith, I have obeyed His laws and worked to accomplish His purpose].~ •

~~~~~God help each one of us start building that kind of faith from this day forward for the rest of our lives.

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