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Editorial

“Will Build to Suit”

Recently when traveling through the rural outskirts of a large metropolitan area we noticed that many acres of fields formerly used to produce rich agricultural harvests, are now displaying large “for sale” signs. One particular phrase we saw printed in large, bold letters and repeated on many of these signs read, “Will build to suit”.

And so it has been for almost 7000 years now — beginning with Cain who willingly went out from the presence of the Lord—man has been *building* this world *to suit* the desires of his heart.

He is determined to create a system—whatever the cost—where he might have at his disposal everything he lost in the garden of Eden. Cain begun by *building* a city—a place *to suit* the heart desires of each soul—a place built apart from any reference to or thought of the rights of his Creator, God.

He wants a constant, reliable supply of necessary things (such as food and clothing) that he not have to trust the God he willingly turned his back on, to care for him. So he looks to those who *dwell in tents and have cattle* to build a world of *plenty*.

Willingly alienated from God and feeling his want of joy and rest, man turns to those who *handle the harp and organ* to build world of heart *satisfaction*.

He expects the marvels of science and industry to ease the burdensome toil his sin caused. No expense or energy are considered too great to set aside God’s judgement of his disobedience—*in the*

sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread. He eagerly turns to *every artificer in brass and iron* to build a world of *comfort and convenience*.

Many times in the sad history of this world his wicked avarice and lust have driven him to oppress his fellow man. The stronger forces the weaker into cruel bondage, compelling those miserable slaves to build *treasure cities* where he stores the bloody abundance of his *conquests and domination*.

He marks all these achievements by erecting monuments to their glory as he unceasingly strives to build a unified, global economy and world — *a tower of Babel*—that will shut heaven out of his thoughts and life. Motivated by the wicked pride of his heart, having built these shrines, man arrogantly says, “*is not this the great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?*”.

Thus it is that man has become a *builder* rather than a *worshipper*. Attempting to create whatever holds promise of fulfilling the emptiness of his heart—a void that none but his Creator can fill—he continues his building. The awful lie of his Godless world system promises to build for each soul whatever is thought will suit the yearnings of a barren heart. Thus the world continues to brazenly place that hollow promise—*will build to suit*—on its *for sale* sign, ever enticing men to believe its lie.

What a great price is exacted from those who have been deceived into futilely chasing after the empty promises of Cain’s world!

Most solemnly tragic of all is that man, in dark

unbelief willingly turns away from the only One who is able to *build* for him every lasting satisfaction, joy and desire that his empty heart could ever want—the lowly *Carpenter* from Nazareth (Mk. 6:3)

This humble blessed Jesus—Divine Eternal Son, God manifest in flesh, now seated as Man at God’s right hand in glory—is the foundation, the *chief corner stone* upon which God is building and accomplishing all His eternal counsels. Further, He will perfectly *build to suit* what is best for each one who turns to Him in honest repentance and faith. But what the Divine *Carpenter* builds, unlike that fleeting impermanence of all man’s efforts, is everlasting—fully glorifying and satisfying to the heart of God.

That such a Divine, marvelous opportunity to possess lasting peace, joy and happiness is so blindly rejected provides stark proof of the impenetrable moral darkness of the human heart. Blinded by his sin, man *sees no beauty* in the Lord Jesus Christ or in *His* building. Except for the mighty working of the Spirit of God, “who commanded the light to shine out of darkness” and “hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6), man would forever remain in his helpless, hopeless condition of ruin and separation from the God Who loves and desires to bless him.

Oh! that each redeemed soul might break forth in praise to God for His sovereign grace which has so perfectly and freely *built* our eternal blessing.

“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build...” (Ps 127:1) *Ed.*

The Armament of Faith

“And David put them off him” (1 Sam. 17:39)

It has been said that the world’s most skillful aids are faith’s surest hindrances. Dear brethren, let us not fight our battles using the armour of this world. Let us be like David who through faith in the God of Israel defeated the mighty enemy, Goliath.

Thus does faith strip itself of all carnal weapons—all that the flesh might trust in. Faith stands entirely in the power of God. Now our learning this is often the hardest part of our lesson; that which we most slowly learn, and soonest forget.

But if we knew more of the secret dealing of God, we should much more speedily rid ourselves off all carnal weapons. The soul which, like David, has been much exercised in secret before God, knows the utter worthlessness of every thing but God’s own strength.

Having thus learnt this blessed lesson, it readily casts off those things which the flesh so esteems as aids. It is free and at liberty by their loss. How far more blessed is this way of learning the worthless futility of the flesh and denying it, than any other.

For want of living and walking in communion before God, we have to learn this lesson in painful discipline, and after many failures. It is the hardest and most painful part of such discipline to be stripped of those things which by habit and education we have all thought were necessary in our spiritual battles. The Christian must learn to stand by faith and aloof from modes of action in which, after the manner of Saul and his armour, the name of the

Lord and human authority or human wisdom, are combined. Such combinations, often called judicious and useful, are most delusive and dangerous to the path of faith.

We see the apostle rejoicing to count all those things esteemed by men loss for the sake of Christ (Phil. 3:8). Why was this not a hard thing to Paul? How could he thus thoroughly renounce and put from him these things so valued and sought after by the world? He had learnt to *rejoice in Christ Jesus*; to be *strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might*.

What we want is much more of such simplicity; remembering that we have the truth of God to address men's consciences. We have weapons *mighty through God*, if we had only simple faith to trust to them alone, rejecting the fleshly armour of human energy, wisdom, and authority.

adapted, J. L. Harris

His love and desire for our blessing

How all that is in Christ just came out so beautifully and perfectly suited to such a one as that poor thing at the well of Samaria! How came He to be there when she came? How can He *to be on earth*? Why did He come out of heaven at all? There is no other answer save the father's in regard to the prodigal: "It was meet and right. . .".

I cannot ask *why* God should shew mercy for He declares, "I will have mercy on whom I will". Blessed be His name He has a character of His own, and He

will show it forth in having mercy on poor sinners. How? Ah, by their being justified by the Son of His love! If a builder, there must be a foundation -stone. His own Son must come off the throne, out of glory if poor sinners are to go up into it. And oh! the willingness of that Son!

“I have meat to eat that ye know not of.” In His soul there was a deep need that went far beyond the need of the body, and He had been meeting that need of His soul, while the disciples were looking after bits of bread for the body. He hungered and thirsted till the work His Father had sent Him to do was done thoroughly. And ah! blessed Lord! because Thy Father is seeking worshippers, Thou canst turn any poor sinner into a worshipper as Thou didst that poor woman of Samaria.

When one thinks of that woman—where is she now? Absent from the body, present with the Lord. And when He comes forth, there she will be with Him, the possessor of eternal life, a monument to redeeming love for all eternity. *G. V. Wigram*

“The Bridegroom cometh”

The day of the apostasy is hastening on with rapid strides, and also the day in which the Lord shall come to catch His own away.

Godly men everywhere, who watch the signs of the times, see the moment approaching which shall terminate the present actings of grace. One feels constrained to speak plainly, asking you where you

are, and what you are about. You have by grace, which has shone brighter and brighter as it has approached its termination, been gathered out of the seething mass of idolatry and wickedness which [is fast overtaking] Christendom and the world. Now the question is whether you are adequately impressed with the responsibility and blessedness of the ground you are on, and walking like men and women whose eyes have been opened.

There has never been in the world's history such a time as the present, and Satan is occupied with none as he is with you; and his occupation with you is the more to be feared because of the subtlety of his operations.

His object is to withdraw your attention from Christ, while you suppose you are on safe ground. It is true, you are on safe ground—but only while Christ is your all in all. Here is where Satan is drawing some away. Interpose anything between your soul and Christ, and *Philadelphia* becomes *Laodicea*; your safe ground is as unsafe as the rest of Christendom; your strength is gone, and you are become weak.

Again I say, Satan has his eye especially upon you, for the purpose of interposing the world in some form between your soul and Christ. He cares not how little, or in what form. If you knew but how little will answer his purpose, you would be alarmed.

It is not by that which is gross or shameful; such is the development, not the beginning of evil. Nor is it by anything glaring that he seeks to ruin you, but in small and seemingly harmless trifles—trifles that

would not shock nor offend anyone, yet constitute the deadly and insidious poison, destined to ruin your testimony and withdraw you from Christ.

Brethren, Christendom is being infected with the spirit of the world—its dress, manners, talk, lack of spirituality, betray it in every gathering. There is a dead weight, a restraint, a want of power, that reveals itself in the meetings, as plainly as if the heart were visibly displayed, its thoughts publicly read.

A form of godliness without power is in Christendom generally. As surely as you tamper with the world, so surely will you drift away to its level. If you tamper with the world, the privileged place you occupy, instead of shielding you, will only expose you to greater condemnation.

It must be Christ *or* the world. It cannot be Christ *and* the world. Remember, you take the place, and claim the privilege of one whose eyes have been opened; and if on the one hand this is unspeakably blessed (and it is), on the other hand it is the most responsible position in which a human being can be found.

Nothing can be more glorious than the position you are called to occupy in these closing days. Saints have stood in the breach, have watched through weary days and nights these nineteen hundred years, and now we only wait for the trumpet of victory to go in and take possession of the glorious inheritance.

Awake, then, from lethargy—slumber no longer. Put away idols and false gods, and go to Bethel, where you will find God to be better than ever you knew Him. Let your prayers mingle with those of

other saints at the prayer meetings; they never were more needed. Neglect no opportunity of gathering up instructions from the Word which alone can keep us from the paths of the destroyer, and let your life be the evidence of the treasures you gather up publicly in assembly or in secret with the Lord.

He could have taken the world without the cross, and left you out, but He would not; and now will you, having been enriched by those agonies and that blood, take the world into your tolerance and leave Him out? Impossible! Your pure mind needs but to be stirred up by way of remembrance. Let us therefore take courage from this very moment forward. Then we shall not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

adapted from "The Remembrancer", circa 1900

Faith, though it has a large stock to draw from in God, has no purse or scrip in man wherein to carry about the expenses of the journey. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

The Lord will neither hasten, nor delay, nor change His movements because of our thoughts. Neither will he teach concerning His movements those who will argue and think out truth, instead of *praying* it out.

excerpted, Words of Truth

“Looking upon Jesus as He walked”

Luke 8:22–56

Beginning in Luke 8:22 we read “On a certain day . . . He went into a ship,” and He fell asleep. In Psa. 127:2 we also read, “So He giveth His beloved sleep.” Now if the disciples had been wise they would have directed their intent and worshipping gaze at their sleeping Master. They would have said “let winds and waves arise; he has said Let us go to the other side, and that is the pledge of safety”. They might have gone to sleep with their Master, but instead, they look at the rising waves, and cry, “Master, we perish.”

Are you often, in providence, called into company with a sleeping Jesus? He does not always manifest Himself at your side—nevertheless, He has said, “Let us go over unto the other side.” His thought is on the end of the journey. Then, when the Lord makes good all that He had promised, the reap astonishment where they should have reaped worshipping admiration. Have you not often found it so? How often He comes down to your level when you cannot reach His elevation! The result is a poor experience instead of a bright and sunny experience. If He cannot take you up on the wings of faith to His elevation, He will come down and save you to the end, though He will show you what you have lost.

Now in beginning in verse 26 we get three cases together: Jesus in Gadara, Jesus in the crowd, and Jesus at the bedside. It is a series of victories. First we see Him in Gadara. Here is the strength of Satan displayed. Here Jesus did not wait on faith for He

came to destroy the works of the devil, and *would* destroy them.

In the case of the poor woman in the crowd, He waits for and upon faith. But with this poor captive of Satan, nothing else could meet his desperate need. Human power must leave him as it found him. The Lord delivers him, and deliverance in His hand is as perfect as captivity in Satan's. And more, his restoration is more than mere restoration. That would never describe the ways of God. With Him it is a bringing forth of fresh glories from ruins. Not only was Legion cast out, but the man was impregnated with this principle, that he would be with Jesus for eternity. Yes, and more, at His bidding would go to the ends of the earth. Is that merely restoration? What would not one give for such a mind as that! To have found a home in His presence; yet, if it be His blessed will, to go to anywhere in His service!

Then as He passed on, a poor woman touched Him in the crowd. He was touched by thousands, but the virtue that was in Him waited on faith. The moment faith commanded, virtue went forth. Now, have you not more in Christ than a *bealer*? This poor woman had. She did not know when she came up that she had a title to *Himself*. So she modestly retreated as a debtor. Very right that a debtor should carry herself with humility. But oh! Christ is more to you and me that! The Healer puts Himself into relationship. When He inquired after her she began to tremble. Her faith had measured her title to touch Him, but she was not prepared when He called here face to face to look at Him. Not until He had said,

“Daughter, be of good comfort.”

There is no spirit of liberty in our souls if we do not know relationship. Nature cannot trust God, but the blessed way of God is to show me that I have an interest in *Himself*, as well as in the saving virtue that is in Him. We have relationship *now*—it does not wait for glory. In spirit I walk in the family mansion now, as soon I shall personally in the glory. The woman left Him, not only with a healed body, but with a calm and satisfied spirit. Is any book so worthy of reading as the book that we call Jesus?

And finally we get to the house of Jairus. There the Lord meets the power of death in fresh victory. The poor damsel is delivered from the bands of death, as the man was delivered from the bands of Satan and the woman from the bands of corruption. Oh! let us acquaint ourselves with Him, and say, “Christ for me, Christ for me!”

from “Notes on the Gospel of Luke”, J. G. Bellet

What will you do if your brother wrongs you? Go after him and seek to set all right! It is love—Divine love—in activity. Love ever seeks the good, even of the one who has gone wrong. Such love is bent on gaining the erring brother.

The only worldly progress the Scripture reveals is that of increasing iniquity.

Spiritual Gems from the Path of Faith

Meditations of a father

“Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares about you.” (1 Peter 5:7 JND Trans.).

Cast your cares on Jesus for He cares so much for you. Things that now concern your heart, of course, concern Him, too. When we have a worry we can choose to let it grow, or we can place it in His hands and simply let it go.

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;” (Joh. 14:16) *“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”* (1 Joh. 2:1)

The word for *comforter* and the word for *advocate* although translated differently in the English, is the exact same word in the Greek. The first refers to the Holy Spirit and His present work in us, the second refers to the Lord Jesus and His present work at God’s right hand. We have One Who lives within Who maintains our interests down here and One with the Father in the glory Who perfectly maintains our interests up there. What blessedness! May the Lord give us to prove in fuller measure in practice in our lives that “God is for us.”

“The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds

through Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:7)

When we lay all at His feet in prayer, this is the result. We don't keep the peace of God, it keeps us. There are so many troubled hearts and minds in today's world. Just to bow in spirit there in heaven before the mercy seat and leave it all there. How wonderful this prescription for the heart and mind.

To stand upon the mount with God, with sunlight in the soul—to hear the storms in vales below; to hear the thunders roll—to be calm with God, thy God, beneath the glorious skies. For to the height on which you stand no storm or clouds can rise. Oh! this is life and this is joy, O God to find Thee so; Thy face to see, Thy voice to hear, and all its love to know.

B. Thonney

God's ways.

All the glories which are to meet in Christ... that is, glories which He is to take as man, not the essential glory of His Person, and all connected with them in us have been first tried in the hands of the first Adam and his failure proved.

Adam, as man failed. The last Adam is the true Head over all things. God in Him victorious over Satan in trial, as the first succumbed.

Man in Israel is tried by the law given as a proving rule of life; hereafter the law will be written in their hearts, and the statutes of God kept by them.

Priesthood was set up in man and failed; Christ will present all saved in the end by His Priesthood.

Royalty in David's son (Solomon) failed and the

kingdom was broken up. It will be set up, never to fail in Christ.

Sovereign power in rule over the Gentiles and the world failed in Nebuchadnezzar who set up idolatry for unity of religion's sake and consequently persecuted God's saints. It will be set up in Christ in perfectness, and in Him shall the Gentiles trust.

The assembly has been set up in its responsibility, that God might be glorified in it, and a glorious Christ fully known. It has failed in this; but when Christ comes, He will be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe. *J.N.Darby*

The last tribunal

The Court—Great white throne. (Rev. 20: 11)

The Judge—The Son of God. (John 5: 22)

The prisoners—The dead. (Rev. 20: 12)

The Charge—Unbelief. (Rev 20:13)

The Witnesses—Three. (Heb. 10: 29)

The Verdict—Guilty. (Rom. 3: 19)

The Sentence—The second death. (Rev. 21: 8)

Seven Gospels described

The Gospel of *the grace of God*. The most comprehensive title given to the gospel that is found in Scripture. (Acts 20:24)

The Gospel of *the glory of the blessed God*. God's glory and satisfaction revealed. (1 Tim. 1:11)

The Gospel of *the glory of Christ*. Where the heavenly side is meant to be prominent. (1 Cor. 9:18)

The *Gospel of Christ*. Where Christ is in view through Whom alone the Glad Tidings can be revealed from God to man. (Rom. 15:19 2 Cor. 9:13)

The *Gospel of God*. Here we have its divine source. (Rom. 15: 16, 2 Cor. 11:7)

The *Gospel of the Kingdom*. This looks to the Messiah in power and glory having taken His rightful place of reign in this world. (Luke 8:1)

The *everlasting Gospel*. The unchanging Good News beginning from when it was first announced, that the Coming One would bruise the Serpent's head. (Rev. 14:6) *N. Berry*

In days of increasing gloom and perplexity like the present, the soul is more sent to the sure hiding-place of safety—to the sunny Pisgah heights (Deut. 34:29) of hope and observation. There it can meditate on the strength of those foundations which God has put under our feet, and know the intimacy of that communion, into which He has even now introduced our hearts, and the brightness of those prospects which He has set before our eyes.

And is *He* our Object? The heart well knows the power of that which is its object. Do we make the Lord Jesus such? Do we find anything of that “sickness of hope” of which we read in Prov. 13:12. Are we able to say “When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble”? (Job 34:29)

selected ministry

A Word on Bible Commentaries

“... *the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.*” (Neh. 8:7,8)

I would like to offer a few comments concerning the use of Biblical commentaries for the believer. When I was a young man a beloved brother, now home with the Lord, used to speak often to us about the *unjust steward* who said he was unable “to dig” and that he was “ashamed to beg” (Luke 16:3). Our brother stressed that while every believer should be able to *dig* (get things out of the Word of God for himself), he should *not be ashamed to beg*—that is, to seek help from other believers by asking questions or reading written ministry and commentaries.

Some dislike or even disdain Biblical commentaries. But I feel such an attitude results in a real loss of enjoyment of the limitless treasures found in the Inspired Word of God. Not only was Ruth the Moabitess invited to glean for herself, but she was encouraged when thirsty to drink from that which the *young men had drawn* (Ruth 2:9). I feel Scriptural commentaries are included in the latter. They provide that which seeks to enlighten the reader’s understanding of the Word in a verse-by-verse, or paragraph-by paragraph format.

While some commentaries have been written expressly as *expositions* of the Word of God, others are records of *addresses, open meeting* ministry, or *gospels* which have been put into print format.

Generally these are reviewed by the speaker, if possible, before they are published.

Believers have available a wealth of wonderful written ministry—especially beginning from the early 1800's. Recently, a number of CD-Rom disks (for use in computers) have been produced, containing all the writings of Mr. Darby, Mr. Kelly and other brethren who were specially used of God in the recovery of assembly (church) truth during this time (1825-1900). In addition, audio cassette tapes of this rich ministry are now also available so that shut-ins or those with a lot of "windshield time" due to work related commuting, can spend that time profitably.

Of course, reading commentaries written by those who accept the Bible as the inspired, flawless Word of God, totally sufficient for faith and practical walk is vitally important. Commentaries and expositions written by those who have not morally walked in the truth they try to minister from the Word, are rightly to be regarded with some suspicion. "*Knowing of whom thou hast learned them*" (2 Tim. 3:14) is a wise Scriptural principle to follow when searching for profitable written or audio ministry.

Some commentaries that we have available are highly technical, containing minute details of Greek and Hebrew syntax. Others are more devotional in nature. Believers have need of both when studying the infinite treasures of God's Word. When this author was much younger, and still forming his basic Biblical thinking, he read many commentaries and is thankful to the Lord for providing them. Now, as a more mature believer, I tend to consult these

commentaries when I am unsure if a thought I (or others) have, is doctrinally correct.

I have often been asked what commentaries I recommend, and I confess that I do have some very definite views on this subject. While having no desire to create a dogmatic list titles of ministry, commentaries, or authors, I would make the following suggestions as a profitable and safe starting point for those who would like to begin building a library of good Biblical ministry.

Brethren are generally agreed that the ministry of three brethren from the 1800's is especially helpful and sound. *J. N. Darby*—especially his Synopsis and Letters plus many other of his doctrinal and expository writings. *G. V. Wigram*—especially for practical matters such as his letters on marriage and other short fragments of sweet meditations. *J. G. Bellett*—especially for devotional ministry such as “The Son of God” and “The Moral Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ”. To these three I would also add *W. Kelly*—especially his expositions of Scripture, as well as *F. G. Patterson's* dispensational and prophetic ministry.

Remember however, in order to profit from any written or spoken ministry, there must be a willingness to receive the “*word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*” (Acts 17:11) While there are many more commentaries which I have profited from reading, *time would fail me to tell* of them all.

May God graciously stir all our hearts to more diligent reading and study of His precious Word, while availing ourselves of the various gifts of

ministry He has given through written commentaries.

R. K. Gorgas

Ed. Note: Requests for further information regarding the subject of written ministry may directed to the author: R. K. Gorgas, 7 Red Road, Chatham, N.J. 07928-2306. Bible Truth Publishers (Addison, IL) and Bibles & Publications (Montreal, QE) are two suppliers of good written ministry and commentaries.

Recently one read about a man called a “Futurist”, a term applied to people who study events, past and present. “Futurists” predict the way things will be in years to come, and government policies are formed on these predictions. These people study history, economics, sociology, international affairs, etc., but it is doubtful they give much thought to Bible study.

How different the course of things might be if the policy makers knew about the end of this world system—knew that God’s judgment is coming soon. How different their plans if they knew God is on the throne and rules “in the kingdom of men, and he appointeth over it whomsoever He will” (Dan. 5:21). What would policies be if men really honoured God (I Sam. 2:30)? When the “King shall reign in righteousness” (Isa. 32:1) a new order shall prevail, not depending in any way on the judgments of men.

If man is ignorant of these Divine truths, he cannot be a *real* futurist. (see I Cor. 1:18-31). “*The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain*” (I Cor. 3:18-20). *adapted, R DeWitt.*

Feed the Flock

Two brothers who lived many years ago, worked together on their family farm. One brother was married with children, while the other was a bachelor. They worked hard, sharing equally in the profit of the farm. Each had a small storage bin in which they deposited equal amounts of the grain produced on the farm.

One day the single brother thought to himself, “It’s not right that my brother and I share everything equally for I’m alone and my needs are simple.” He decided that each night he would fill a sack with grain from his bin and unnoticed in the darkness, would quietly dump it into his brother’s bin.

Meanwhile, the married brother thought to himself, “it’s not right that my brother and I share everything equally, for I have my wife and children to care for me in my old age, but he has no one to help him with his future needs.” So he decided that each night he would quietly fill a sack with the grain from his bin, and pour it into his brother’s bin.

Until the night some months later when they accidentally bumped into each other during their nocturnal missions of charity, neither brother could understand why his supply of grain never dwindled.

This (probably fictional) story illustrates important Divine principles which believers may sometimes be prone to forget. We read in 1Joh. 3:16, “*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*” While there are times

when men are called upon to prove the depth of their love for another by *dying* (Joh. 15:13), an equally strong test of love is to lay down one's life by *living* for others—that is, setting aside personal desires to serve others. “. . . *by love serve one another.*” (Gal. 5:13) Let each apply in *principle* and *reality* the words of our blessed Saviour: “*Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.*” (Luke 17:33) We will not be losers for doing so! *Ed.*

Answers to May 2000 Bible Challenger

Wisdom	Ecc. 9:16
Arm	Luke 1:51
Young men	Prov. 20:29
Oxen	Prov. 14:4
Faith	Heb. 11:11
Tillest	Gen. 4:12
House of bondage	Ex. 13:14
Eleven hundred	Jud. 16:5
Law	1 Cor. 15:56
Open door	Rev. 3:8
Right hand	Acts 3:7
Days of our years	Psa. 90:10

“The **WAY OF THE LORD** is strength to the upright:
but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.
(Job 35:10) *R. Erisman*

Practical Reflections

Acts 6:4–15

v 4 “*But we will give ourselves continually to prayer; and to the ministry of the word.*”

Satan’s attempt to turn the apostles aside from ministering the truth in dependence upon God to the assembly, fails. The two vital and essential bulwarks of Christian growth are *prayer* and *reading* the Bible. Satan uses all means necessary to hinder believers from *daily* attending to these two vital spiritual activities. May we have *purpose of heart* (like the apostles) to continue *instant in prayer* and *reading*, never giving in to distractions the enemy may place in our way as we walk the path of faith.

v 6, 7 “*Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*”

Dependence on God and a desire for peace and blessing in the assembly produces a wonderful display of grace. The seven who were selected were all *Grecian* believers—the very group who were concerned that their widows were being neglected in the *daily ministrations*! (See vv. 1-3, 5)

Another vitally important assembly principle seen here is that ministry must be carried out in fellowship with the *apostles’ doctrine*. There is great activity today done in the name of Christianity. But if the apostles have not expressed fellowship (*laying*

on of the hands) with it—that is, if the ministry is not carried out according to Divine truth taught by the apostles, believers do well to separate themselves from such things. The assembly in all its ways should always be in *fellowship* with *the apostles' doctrine*. (Acts 2:42)

v 8 “*And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.*”

As the dispensation of the *day of grace* draws to a close, we do not expect to see *great wonders* and *miracles* marking Christianity. But believers need more than ever, to diligently walk in the fear of God. Walking to His glory amidst the confusion of professing Christianity, will still require *great faith* and being *filled* with the Spirit.

v 9 “*Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.*”

Where the Spirit of God is working, Satan will ever be found opposing. But God was infinitely above the enemy's efforts to cause the growing hatred and eventual murder of Stephen. *Them of Cilicia*, whose chief city was Tarsus, must surely have included an *insolent overbearing* (see 1 Tim. 1:13, JND trans.) young man named Saul. Gathered together with those who vehemently denied the gospel, he was to become a tremendous trophy of the mighty, sovereign grace of God!

v 10 “*And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.*”

Had Stephen by nature been nothing more than

an eloquent speaker, these wicked men would have been able to resist and confound his message. But he spoke *as the Spirit gave [him] utterance* (Acts 2:4), and they were powerless to withstand his words. The wonderful, Divine truth of God, when spoken in any circumstance and in any age, always renders the enemy's opposition powerless. But it is not the *ability* of the speaker that brings about this effect—it is due to the *power* of the living Word of God.

v 11 *“Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.”*

Open opposition of the truth is raised against Stephen by those who hated the truth. The one who motivated their actions—Satan— is *a liar, and the father of it* (Joh 8:44) and they were those who *changed the truth of God into a lie*. (Rom. 1:25) They seek to influence the people using the lie of blasphemy against *Moses* and *God*. But this only shows the real condition of their heart. Moses the servant of Jehovah—a mere man— has become more important to them than the God he faithfully served. In the garden, Satan led man into sin by suggesting that he could become *as gods*. (Gen 3:5)

v 12 *“And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council,”*

The *people* come first. Once the crowds are stirred up, the wicked leaders feel safe to move according to the desires of their hearts. They had *feared* the people when the Lord Jesus was here, had *used* the people to gain their wicked ends with

Pilate, and had *deceived* the people concerning His glorious resurrection. Now they act toward the *servant* as they had previously, the *Master*. (Mat. 10:25) Today the world which chose Barabbas instead of Jesus, still rejects God's truth.

v 13 *“And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:”*

The sinful, dark condition of the Jewish *leaders'* hearts is clearly displayed. Stephen is no longer accused of speaking against *Moses and God*, but against the *temple* and the *law*. And even in this, the Word of God is last. They had turned the Father's *house of prayer* into an *house of merchandise*, while arrogantly flaunting the Law they wouldn't obey. Man's religion glorifies and worships what is seen while it only pretends to value God's Word.

v 14 *“For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.”*

The hatred of man's heart willingly and knowingly twists the truth of God. How dangerous are the thoughts of the religious man in whose dark, lifeless heart dwells such animosity against Light, Love and Truth! God's Word then—as today—is to unsaved man, nothing more than a book of *customs*.

v 15 *“And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.”*

Stephen's countenance proved the reality of his faith God's Word, before he spoke. Again we see that *action* comes before *words*. (Jas.2:17) *Ed.*

Bible Challenger

The first letter of the following responses form the words from which the sea ceased when a prophet's bidding was hesitatingly obeyed. The number in brackets indicates the number of words in each answer.

1. The first of three phenomena which ceased, causing a might ruler to continue a hardening process. [1]

2. An apostolic command which, when fully heeded, will provide confidence to believers that they have ceased from sin. [3]

3. To what was a great storm transformed into, after the wind ceased, being rebuked by the One who had power over the elements. [2]

4. The very place where some apostles ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ, even after they were commanded to refrain from doing so. [3]

5. The frequency of an apostle's warnings, which ceased not over the space of three years that there would arise perverse teaching against the Christian church and doctrines. [3]

6. A rebuke for a Pharisee from his invited Guest, in neglecting a common courtesy, while a sinful woman ceased not to show her deeply felt affection for that same Person. [4]

Answers to these questions will be found, Lord willing, in the next issue of the *Christian Shepherd*.

R. Erisman