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## **Editorial**

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### **“Help Me!”—“It’s Not Fair!”**

**D**uring the flu epidemic that swept the country this past January, both our mothers needed to be hospitalized—in each case initially spending some of that time in the emergency room of a local hospital. As I stood beside my mom’s bed in one of the emergency wards (which was filled to capacity) a frightened elderly man in the next cubicle kept calling for help. Though surrounded by family and competent, skilled medical personnel who were taking care of his needs and seeking to assure him that all was going to be OK, he kept calling out “help me, help me!” Then in rising desperation, he began to utter frantic, profane curses in his calls for help.

During this time a young woman who had fallen, evidently breaking a bone, was also admitted to the emergency room. It was new year’s eve and she was crying—not so much from pain, but from the frustration of having her plans for the evening’s festivities so abruptly cancelled. “It’s not fair, it’s just not fair”, she sobbed to the one who sat with her.

A dear brother, having heard of my mother’s condition had come to the emergency room to see her. As we stood at her bedside he asked the Lord Jesus to comfort and help her—a prayer that was clearly audible to all through the thin curtains that separated the emergency room cubicles. What a difference that prayer seemed to make! The room suddenly became very quiet. The man who had been

calling for help quieted, his cursing ceased, and the unhappy young woman stopped her sobbing.

How little we realize perhaps, the mighty power and blessed effects of earnest, heartfelt prayer. An old writer has called prayer a “mighty engine”, and it surely is so. Some have noted that the week night prayer meeting often seems the most poorly attended assembly meeting. This sad condition results in spiritual weakness and cold lethargy gripping believers. May the Lord stir each heart to more energetic private and collective prayer in these closing moments of the day of grace. There surely is no lack of circumstances needing prayer! May our hearts be stirred to more faithfully put to use the Divine, mighty power of prayer.

#### **Prayer for others**

We can be encouraged by the multitude of witnesses to the efficacy of prayer recorded in the Word of God (*pray* and *prayer* are mentioned 611 times in the KJV Bible!). One early mention of prayer is found in Gen. 20:7 when Abraham prays for the healing of Abimelech and his household. Another early example is the prayer of Abraham’s servant that God would prosper his mission to find a suitable bride for his master’s son (Gen. 24:12). These two accounts contain important principles for encouraging and guiding believers in prayer.

We notice that in both cases, the one praying was seeking the ultimate blessing of others, not self. While surely right and vitally important to pray for personal needs, it is instructive to find early in the

Word that prayers have the character of *service*.

Doubtless there are multitudes of trials and difficulties that our brethren are passing through and for which we might earnestly pray. Abraham's prayer for Abimilech was in reality a matter of life and death for his household. Today, Christian families—households—are a special target of the enemy and have great need of individual and collective prayer that they might be preserved.

Then too, how many young believers are searching for a life's companion or beginning life together. Others—young and old—are planning careers, looking for jobs, considering schooling or other major life-style changes. Surely such are all in need of our prayers for wisdom and guidance as they make decisions that bear lifelong consequences. How good to spend time praying for the needs of others.

#### **Prayer when there is failure**

In Num. 12:3 Moses is called *meeek* above *all the men upon the face of the earth*. How often do we find this humble servant of God earnestly praying for the stubborn, disobedient people that God had delivered from Egypt's slavery. We see his yearning beautifully expressed in Ex. 32:31,32 after the people had worshipped the golden calf. Moses begs Jehovah to forgive them this awful sin, willing even to bear their guilt and judgement himself.

In Num. 14:19 when the Israelites stubbornly refuse to enter the promised land Moses utters these words of intercessory prayer to the Lord: "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according

unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.”

1Jn. 5:16 not only shows the great value of prayer on behalf of one who has failed in his Christian life, but the importance of seeking to discern when and how to pray for such a brother or sister. Oh! for a meek and humble heart of love such as Moses had, to be found thus pleading for one—redeemed and precious to the heart of Christ—who may be straying in the prodigal’s path.

What abundant blessings might result in assemblies, families, and individual lives, if there were greater united desire to come together for earnest collective prayer on the behalf of those in need.

We read in James 5:19, 20 that a believer who turns back one erring *from the truth* “shall save a soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins.” What a motive this provides to stir us to fervent, earnest prayer! May our hearts be filled with love and compassion for those who are *out of the way*.

### **The Power of Prayer**

It has been rightly said that “prayer changes things”. Many of the mighty movements of the Spirit of God in the salvation of lost souls in various lands in the past 200 years have been preceded and sustained by spontaneous, earnest, united prayer. We find recorded in the Word of God that prayer often *precedes* God’s acting in His infinite power. Solomon’s prayer resulted in receiving great wisdom (1 Ki. 3:9). Jehosaphat’s lovely prayer in 2 Chron. 20:2-12 resulted in salvation from a mighty foe and

great victory for the people of God, while Hezekiah's earnest prayer resulted in his healing from sickness (2 In. 20:2). The rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem began with Nehemiah's heartfelt prayers (Neh. 1:4, 2:4) and many lives were spared (and God glorified) through the prayers of Daniel and his three companions (Dan 2:17, 18).

A striking New Testament example of the power of prayer is found in Acts 12 where *prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for Peter*. These prayers set in motion Divine power which the wicked Herod's strongest iron bars, prison doors and soldiers could not hinder or stop.

The Apostle Paul through Divine inspiration also shows that prayer *changes things*. He beseeches the Hebrew Christians to *pray for us* and then adds, "But I much more beseech you to do this, that I may *the more quickly be restored to you*." (Heb. 13:19 JND) The beloved apostle knew that he would be released to them, but their earnest prayers for him would hasten the time of that happy liberty.

While these examples—some of many found in the Word—encourage us to earnest prayer, let us also remember the vital importance of walking in practical Christian righteousness so that our *fervent supplications* will have *much power*. (Jas. 5:16 JND).

### **Combatting in prayer**

A dear, mentally handicapped brother often mentions; "people tell me there ain't a thing I can do for the Lord. But I can pray to that precious One above!" Eternity alone will reveal the souls saved and

blessed through this *prayer warrior's* constant and earnest supplications. We find the character of *combat* connected with prayer in Col. 4:12 (JND). “Epaphras . . . the bondman of Christ Jesus, salutes you, always *combating earnestly for you in prayers*, to the end that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”

We remember hearing of the home call of an elderly brother who had been faithful in the assembly all his life—yet rarely taking audible part. At his funeral as a brother rode in the hearse to the cemetery, the undertaker asked him if the man had done much physical labor during his life. The brother, rather surprised by such a question said, “Why no, he worked in an office. Why do you ask?”

The undertaker replied, “That is remarkable, for never in all my years have I seen such callouses on a person’s knees.” It was then the brother realized what the *service* of this saint had been for his life.

### **The Perfect Man and Prayer**

In the gospel of Luke, the Spirit of God has recorded seven different occasions when our blessed Lord, as the perfect, dependent Man is seen praying. Let us follow His Divine example, seeking grace to cultivate a life of earnest and effectual prayer, availing ourselves continually of this never failing resource of power and blessing.

“Pray without ceasing.” (1Thess. 5:17)

“. . . continuing instant in prayer;” (Rom. 12:12)

“they continued stedfastly . . . in prayers.” (Acts 2:42)

*Ed.*

## *Meditations of a father*

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*“I will put My trust in Him.”* (Heb. 2:13)

The Lord Jesus, as Man, was going back to the Father after having completed His work down here. But He was leaving here some poor failing squabbling disciples. Up there He would be their Great High Priest, to intercede for them. He put His trust in the Father for their care. Isn't it wonderful to think of Him praying for us now, as He did then for them, in those words we have recorded, “I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou has given Me.” What better care could any of us have then that?

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*“Behold, I stand at the door and am knocking; if any one hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me.”* (Rev. 3:20 JND trans.)

In the Church of Laodicea there was no room for Christ inside. The call He gives as He knocks is individual—“If any *one*”, “I will come in unto *him*”, “sup with *him*”, “*be* with Me.” Life today is so high pressured it is easy to let it's fast paced confusion crowd the Wisdom of God right out the door [of our hearts] and let it be shut with Him on the outside. Then is the time we need to step back and reorder our priorities.

## ***The Jews—A meditation on Isaiah 18***

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It is the Christian's privilege to know beforehand the things that are coming on the earth, although they do not immediately concern him, because his hopes are heavenly where judgement—judgements which happen before the establishment of the millennial kingdom—cannot come.

The Christian awaits the coming of the “Morning Star” (Rev. 22:16, 1 Thess. 4:16, 17). This blessed event takes place before the darkness which now shrouds the world is dispelled by the rising of the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal. 4:2) which fills the world with blessing. And it is the Christian who will “shine forth as the sun” with Christ in the Father's kingdom (Matt. 13:43).

In Isaiah 18 we have in seven verses, a *complete history* of the events which take place at the time the Jews return to their land in a condition of apostasy. The Lord does not interfere, but allows things to go on apparently prospering. Israel has even the appearance of fruitbearing in the land of the fathers. However, those nations who had favored their return recommence the old hostility to the Jews who then become their prey. The Lord then interferes with His might bringing a remnant of them as a *present* to Himself— to the place of His name—Mount Zion which He loves.

vv 1-3 The prophet pronounces *woe* upon some great unnamed nation which lies outside the Euphrates and Nile rivers—the two great boundaries of the land of Israel. This nation, evidently a great

maritime power, had engaged in favoring and helping the return of the people of Israel. He then calls all the inhabitants of the world—dwellers upon the earth—to see and hear.

v 4 The Lord tells the prophet that He will take His rest, not interfering with all that goes on. Man is allowed to run on the the height of his folly, that God may show to him his powerlessness.

vv 5-6 *Afore the harvest* is a figure of separating and gathering the *vintage* of judgment when the returned Jews seem to be spreading out as a vine in the land; even appearing to bear fruit—“the sour grape ripening in the flower.” The vine is an old figure of the nation (Isa. 5, Psa. 80:8-16, etc.).

Then the old hatred of the nations is turned against Israel and all is destroyed. The emissaries of Satan shall *summer* upon them, and the nations shall *winter* upon them; and all that appeared so promising is dashed to the ground. This is the time of “Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7)

vv 7 *In that time*—in this state of things then “shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts”. This speaks of a remnant of Israel—scattered and peeled from a people terrible (*wonderful*) from their beginning hitherto. The Lord Himself brings to Himself *a present* of the residue, the spared remnant, of His people to Mount Zion—the place of His rest forever (Psa. 132:13,14). The nation, having refused nationally the gospel of God’s *grace*, is saved through the *judgments* of the Lord, which introduces the Kingdom.

The Christian’s hope is but one—the coming of

the Lord Jesus to take His people out of the world, before these judgments take place. He has promised this saying, "*Because thou has kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*" (Rev. 3:20)

This *hour of temptation* is detailed in Isa. 24. It takes place before the Lord of Hosts reigns in Mount Zion. Then in Isa. 25 the remnant of the Jews are delivered saying "*lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord: we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.*" Isa. 26 gives us the song of the delivered remnant while Isa. 27 gives us the completing of the work, and the gathering of the ten tribes to worship with their brethren of Judah, the Lord of Hosts at Jerusalem in the glory of the millennium.

The Lord's *coming* is the hope of the church—His *appearing in glory with her*, after the tribulation, which happens between these events, is the *deliverance* of the Jews and the introduction of the kingdom.

*F. G. Patterson*

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Conscience, enlightened by the law of God says, *I ought*. That is the obedience of duty, but the heart glowing with the love of God says, *I must*.

The patience of God in judgement is one of His most marvelous ways. Let us be imitators of Him.  
*Spiritual Gems for the Path of Faith*

## ***“Looking upon Jesus as He walked”***

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Luke 8 begins with the parable of the sower. Do you think you have found the secret of that parable? It is to expose man. The seed was one and the same, but the dropping of the seed here and there was to expose the character of the soil. The seed makes manifest the soil. There is not a heart that is not seen characterized in one or the other of these soils.

The first is the character of a highway. That is where the devil prevails. The second is the rock where nature prevails, and the third is thorny ground where the Holy Ghost prevails. The business of the parable is to expose you to yourself, and to make manifest the four secret influences under the power of which we are all morally moving every hour.

Consider the joy of the *stony ground bearer*. It is well to rejoice, but if when I listen to the claims of God, my conscience is not reached, that is a bad symptom. If I have revolted from God, am I to return to Him without conviction of conscience? It would be an insult to Him.

The *thorny ground bearers* are a grave-hearted people that weigh everything in anxious balances. They carry the balances in their pocket, and try the importance of everything; but the mischief is that, as they weigh, they make the world equal in importance with Christ. Do we not often observe that calculating spirit prevailing?

In contrast with the others we get the good ground. We are not told what has made it good, but suppose we have the devil, nature, and the world in

the first three parables, what is the remaining influence? Nothing but the Holy Ghost. It is important to remember that the *plow* must come before the *seed basket*. What makes the heart good but He that has gone forth to plow the fallow ground and sow the seed.

God could never get a blade of grass from our hearts if He did not work Himself. The heart can never have anything for God that has not gone through the process of the plow. Those of the *thorny ground* talk of their farms, businesses or merchandise while those *by the highway* say, "Oh! let us think of these things tomorrow!" And there is that spirit that can rejoice even under a sermon.

It is *happy* for me when my conscience has to do with God—for then everything has to do with Him. When we have Christ, we have God. The world is full of its speculations about God, and the result of them all is thick darkness which the wisdom of man finds impenetrable. In Christ we find nothing less than the full glory of God. Let *me* take the happy path of studying Jesus, for by that blessed, happy path, I can study the Father.

*adapted, Notes on the Gospel of Luke, J. G. Bellet*

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"*I am not ashamed...*" (Rom. 1:16), "*... whose glory is in their shame*" (Phil. 3:18-19)

Don't be *ashamed of* the gospel of Christ, but neither be a *shame on* the gospel of Christ!

*M. Payette*

## A Loving Warning to Parents

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“... *whatsoever things are pure... think on these things.*” (Phil. 4:8)

Recently an entertainment fad has been increasingly capturing the hearts and minds of children. The craze, called *Pokemon*®, began some years ago in Japan, exploded in popularity and has spread to Western lands. Its immense profit making potential is evidenced by the number of well known companies using *Pokemon*® cards as incentives to motivate consumers to buy their products.

While we do not intend to present the profitless details of this frenzy, we do feel exercised to warn our readers—especially parents who have young children— of the very real and solemn dangers involved in this supposedly harmless entertainment. It is definitely not as many may think, a “harmless fad”. The moral and spiritual danger of *Pokemon*® is real though *very subtle*, especially as it effects the hearts and minds of its target audience—children.

### ***Pokemon*® is not a good name (Prov. 22:1)**

Briefly, *Pokemon*® is a game conceived by a Japanese teenager, supposedly based on a group of imaginary, harmless creatures. Each are displayed in color on small cards. He used the concept of *role playing* games to create a fantasy world in which a small group of fictitious children chase these little creatures, seeking to capture all of them. But even these imaginary children in the original game are given Godless, immoral character traits. A main

purpose of this fantasy is to draw children into the same imaginary world, where they too will try to *capture* (collect) all the Pokemon® creature cards.

Let us all remember that *evil communications corrupt good manners*. (1Cor 15:33) Neither the imaginary Pokemon® creatures, or the fictional band of children which chase them, will draw the hearts of our little ones closer to the blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

*“But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.”* (Luke 18:16)

### **Hidden dangers**

Some Pokemon® monsters are vaguely fashioned after common animals while others may depict forces of nature or other mystical themes. In every case the bright, colorful Pokemon® creatures appear harmless. However, the very name “Pokemon®” betrays the hidden wickedness of these imaginary creatures. The name *Pokemon®* is a combination of two Japanese words literally meaning “pocket demons”. Each *pocket demon* (there are at least 150 different kinds) supposedly possesses certain abilities, strengths and weaknesses. These abilities are usually supernatural or mystical and can be developed into even greater abilities by fighting, winning battles with other Pokemon® creatures.

*“bold aloof from every form of wickedness”* (1Thess 5:22, JND trans.) *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance:..”* (Gal 5:22,23)

### Lulling young minds to accept evil

Such a name given to this fantasy, role playing game ought in itself to serve as a warning to parents concerned with what occupies childrens' minds. Pokemon® cards—in reality depictions of *demons* (imaginary or real)— are small enough to be carried in a child's pocket, and can quickly gain influence over their fertile imaginations.

Surely, one of Satan's goals in Pokemon® is to fill childrens' tender minds with images of demons as *cute, small and harmless*. Once this is achieved, they will more easily accept without fear the influences and effects of real, wicked spirits that are becoming more openly active in so called *Christian* lands.

*“I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. . . ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. . . Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?”* (1 Cor. 10:20-22)

### An angel of light

Let none be fooled by the harmless looking pictures and bright colors with which these imaginary demons are presented to impressionable children. We read in 2 Cor. 11:14 that *Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light*. It was as a beautiful creature of light that the serpent presented himself to Eve in the garden—a form calculated to fool her, not trouble or terrify her. We believe that it is this very same wicked and awful character in which the enemy now seeks to corrupt and defile young childrens' minds through such things as Pokemon® cards.

### No agreement between light and darkness

The Spirit of God asks a very solemn question in 2 Cor. 6:15: “*And what concord hath Christ with Belial?*” May God grant that Christian parents raising their children for the Lord’s glory and for their blessing, be careful about allowing their children’s hearts to get attached to what is clearly influenced by the *prince of the power of the air*. (Eph. 2:2)

Most Christian parents—aware of the awful demonic influences involved in *role playing* games such as *Dungeons and Dragons*®—would never willingly allow their children to become involved with such evil. Yet we believe that Pokemon® is nothing more than an innocent looking version of these very kinds of games—intended by the enemy of our souls to harden the tender hearts of young children into accepting the gross evils connected with other openly satanic *role playing* games. “*But exhort one another daily...lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*” (Heb. 3:13)

### Be content

In closing, it should be noted that the trademark phrase of Pokemon® is “gotta catch ‘em all”—an obvious effort to encourage children to continually buy more cards as they try to *capture* every pocket demon available. Of course man looks upon such a thing as *harmless*—a clever way to market and sell more Pokemon® cards and related merchandise.

But in reality, such efforts instill discontent in young children’s tender hearts—a fleshly principle of covetousness which is wholly at odds with the

admonition found in 1Tim. 6:8: “*And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.*” and 1Tim 6:6: “*But godliness with contentment is great gain.*”

There are multitudes of activities and hobbies which parents may encourage their children in, enjoying fellowship with them in that realm of nature. But much parental wisdom is needed to discern whether new forms of entertainment such as Pokemon® are harmless, innocent fun, or part of the *smoke of the pit* (Rev. 9:2). “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God...*” (1Jo 4:1). “*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him*” (Jas 1:5).

May parents heed the warning “... *because the days are evil... be not foolish, but understanding what is the will of the Lord*”, in the kinds of entertainment they allow their children to experience.

*Ed.*

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If those to whom God in His grace has committed a testimony, do not employ this testimony in behalf of others according to the grace that bestowed it, they will soon become unfaithful in their own walk before God. If they truly acknowledged God, they would feel bound to make known His name, to impart this blessing to others. If they do not own His glory and His grace, they will assuredly be unable to maintain their own walk before Him. God, who is full of grace, being our only strength, it cannot be otherwise.      *Synopsis on Jonah, J. N. D.*

### Thoughts on Grace and Mercy

Grace is God in sovereign goodness coming out in blessing to man, who deserves nothing but judgment. “*For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor; that ye, through His poverty might be rich.*” (2 Cor 8:9)

You get that in Eph. 1:6 (JND trans.), “*to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has taken us into favour in the Beloved.*” That expression is used one other place in Scripture (Luke 1:28) in connection with Mary: “*The angel came unto her and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored (or “thou that art taken into favor”) the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women.*”

In Eph. 2:8 the faith that we have is the gift of God's grace;. We wouldn't believe but for the grace of God. It says “*For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God;*” What is the gift of God? Grace? No! Grace means *gift*. The gift that is being spoken of is *faith*—the gift of God. The very faith that enables us to lay hold upon what the God of grace has provided. It's the gift of God—even our believing.

We can't say, “Well, I've believed, that's why I'm in heaven, that's to my credit, and you didn't and that's why you're in hell.” Why, even the faith that enabled me to believe is the gift of God. It's all grace; it's all sovereign grace.

The difference between *mercy* and *grace* is that *mercy* spares us from what we deserved. We deserved hell but *mercy* spares us from what we

deserve. *Grace* gives us what we don't deserve and that's heaven and all the blessings that we have.

Mercy is great in the greatness of our need: grace is great in the greatness of the giver. That magnifies Him, while mercy delivers us from our need. Paul, when he asked that the Lord take away that thorn in the flesh, was asking for mercy. "Deliver me from it". The Lord says, "No, but I'll give grace to bear it".

*adapted excerpts from a reading, C. Hendricks*

### **Answers to April 2000 Bible Challenger**

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|                            |             |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| <b>H</b> ear               | Neh. 2:12   |
| <b>E</b> arly              | Isa. 26:9   |
| <b>G</b> reat noise        | 2 Pet. 3:10 |
| <b>I</b> nstruct me        | Psa. 16:7   |
| <b>V</b> ision             | Acts 16:9   |
| <b>E</b> xceedingly strong | Dan. 7:7    |
| <b>T</b> housand years     | Psa. 90:4   |
| <b>H</b> unger             | Lam. 2:19   |
| <b>S</b> peak              | Acts 18:9   |
| <b>O</b> ver turn them     | Job 34:25   |
| <b>N</b> ame (of the Lord) | Psa. 119:55 |
| <b>G</b> reat cry          | Exo. 12:30  |
| <b>S</b> tumbleth          | Joh. 11:10  |

"But none saith, Where is God my maker, who  
**GIVETH SONGS** in the night. (Job 35:10)

*R. Erisman*

## ***Feed the Flock***

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### **Deadly and Uncontrollable**

Some people earn a living hunting poisonous snakes. After capturing these deadly creatures, they carefully *milk* the venom from the serpent's mouth and sell it to companies who manufacture anti-venom drugs and other beneficial medicines.

Some hunters were commissioned to collect the venom of what is considered one of the world's most deadly snakes—the African Black Mamba. So powerful is this serpent's venom that without proper medical treatment, humans bitten by it often die within 20 minutes. Its size—10 to 14 feet long,—its speed—up to 10 miles per hour—and its aggressiveness—rather than fleeing, this easily irritated creature often chases after humans or other prey—make its capture particularly dangerous.

After some time, the three snake hunters finally captured an 11 foot male Black Mamba. They carefully placed the serpent inside a special white bag made of strong fabric, securing its opening to make escape impossible. Yet, in spite of all their precautions, one of the men accidentally brushed his hand against the outside of the sack. Instantly the already aroused serpent—with its incredible sensing ability—struck, its fangs piercing through the sack's fabric and sinking into the man's hand.

Within moments after being bitten, the hunter began to feel his feet and hands becoming numb as the venom quickly worked its deadly effects. By the time he was carried into a nearby hospital a scant 10

minutes after being bitten, he was having trouble breathing and was no longer able to speak clearly.

After several desperate hours while he was attached to a heart-lung machine, the anti-venom finally began to take effect. Some hours after this, the fortunate (and wiser) snake hunter walked unaided out of the hospital emergency room.

This account reminds us of many who handle sin in the same careless way, thinking that they have the strength and ability—though already dying from the fatal poison of sin (Rom. 3:23, 6:23)—to control the power of that *old serpent*, Satan. (Rev. 12:9)

Poor, deluded Judas may have thought that his public association with the blessed Lord Jesus was like that white sack, hiding and constraining the wicked deeds of his covetous heart (Joh. 12:6). But *all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do* (Heb. 4:13). He found out too late that his *sins surely found him out* and he must reap what he had sown. (Gal. 6:7)

Unable to hide or control the sin in his heart, Judas betrays the Lord of Glory, receiving the *due reward* of his awful deed (Matt. 27:5). How solemn to think that today, this man who sought to *cover his sin* is forever in a Godless, dark eternity of agony and hopeless sorrow (Matt. 25:30).

*“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”* (Prov. 28:13). *“O death, where is thy sting? .. thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (1 Cor 15:55, 57)

*Ed.*

## Practical Reflections

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Acts 5:34-6:3

v 34, 35 *“Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.”*

Though not a Divine message, Gamaliel’s warning was timely. Man—so hardened against God’s Truth—may still be swayed by human reason and may even do the *right* thing, though without faith in God.

v 36, 37 *“For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.”*

With all his natural learning, Gamaliel could only equate Jesus the Son of God with two common criminals. His human reasoning is flawless, but there is no heart attachment to the ascended Christ. This brilliant and respected doctor of Jewish law *by wisdom knew not God*, for the *preaching of Jesus was foolishness* to him. (1Cor. 1:21)

v 38 *“And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or*

*this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.”*

Gamaliel would exercise *prudence* in his advice. Though he evidently did not *believe* in his heart (else he would have openly embraced Christianity), he encourages caution *just in case* the evident mighty work was of God!

He seeks *neutrality*, distancing himself from the hatred of the other Jewish leaders which to his cultured mind was *unreasonable*. But though he cautions not to *fight against God*, Gammaliel did not realize that his *prudence* was as much rejection of the truth as the open hatred of his brethren. There can be no neutrality with Christ—for the soul *that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad*. (Matt. 12:30)

v 40 *“And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.”*

For all of Gammaliel’s reputation, wisdom and prudence, the hearts of the Jewish leaders remain implacable and unchanged in their hatred of Jesus and the gospel of His resurrection. Beatings and threats are the manner in which these hypocrits *refrain* from hindering the work of God!

v 41 *“And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”*

The reality of the gospel and faith in the risen Jesus of Nazareth is evidenced in the early church

not only in miracles and acts of mighty power, but in seeing those who suffer unrighteously, filled with joy. What a testimony to this dark world when a believer suffering for the Name of Christ at the hands of wicked men, does so with joy counting such to be a privilege! (see 1 Pet. 2:19, 2 Tim. 3:12)

▼ 42 “*And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*”

The apostles submit to the unrighteous beatings, but they totally disregard the Jewish leaders’ wicked commands to cease preaching the glorious gospel. We should expect and submit to unrighteous persecution for the blessed Name of Jesus. But let us never cease doing *the work of an evangelist*.

Chap. 6:1 “*And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.*”

Satan, unable to hinder the early assembly by outward persecution, seeks to corrupt it by discontent from within. The Grecians may have had good reason for their concerns, but the apostles had just given the brethren a wonderful example of quietly suffering injustices and wrongs.

How vital to the spiritual health of assemblies, that this humble spirit still characterize the interactions of believers. “*Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.*” (Eph 4:32)

▼ 2 “*Then the twelve called the multitude of the*

*disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.”*

Both services are necessary—ministering the *Word* and ministering to *practical needs*. But the apostles’ service was clearly to teach the *doctrine* of Christ to believers—the *apostles’ doctrine*. If Satan were successful in drawing them away from that vitally important ministry, a greatly weakened assembly would result.

Each saint of God—young and old—has some specific *ministry* to accomplish for the glory of Christ and the blessing of His body, the assembly. In any measure that Satan is able to draw one away from their appointed ministry, the body of Christ suffers lack. May we all be diligent in fulfilling that which our blessed Head, the Lord Jesus, has given each to do. (Col. 4:17, 1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 2:16)

▼ 3 “*Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.*”

The importance of *moral weight* in personal life is seen early in the assembly. We might think that the *first* requirement for *deacon* ministry is that one be *full of the Holy Ghost*. Yet though absolutely vital, the Spirit has seen fit to mention *of honest report* first. This principle—that one carry *moral weight* before the world and his brethren—is vital for the health and welfare of the assembly. Today, even though there are no longer apostles, it is just as critical that the life and ministry of each believer be marked by being of *honest report*. *Ed.*

### Fragments

Are you living in the *power* of life in Christ? We have heard of many who have been forced to live for a long time in a damp, dark prison. Then when brought out into the sunshine, have found themselves unable to walk or go through the varied functions of life. Believers want more than *pulsation* of life—you want the *power* of life. Life not only to make a start, but to press on.

Christ not only gave me life, but I am to shew the *power* of that life—to shew what the persons are who have that life. I have to walk with feet unsoiled, in a world where there is a great deal to soil them. I am to, by every act, develop and display the great fact of my life being a life hid with Christ in God.

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Can I bring anything into God's presence where none but Christ is precious? Will *my work* shine there? No! none but Christ can *shine* there!

G. V. Wigram

### Bible Challenger

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The first letters of the following responses form the words that describe the course that the upright are following when there is a manifestation of the Lord's strength with them. The number in brackets indicates the number of words in each answer.

1. What did the *preacher* proclaim in his writings, that is better than *strength*. (1)
2. With what did god show his *strength* to the one

who rejoiced in God her Saviour. (1)

3. If the beauty of old men is the gray head, to whom is the glory of *strength* imparted. (2)

4. What is absent where cleanliness is found, but whose presence foretells availability of great *strength*. (1)

5. What enabled an aged woman to receive *strength*. (1)

6. A word describing a typical farming chore that a future fugative and vagabond heard that, indicated that the *strength* of the ground was soon to be diminished. (1)

7. That from which the *strength* of the hand of the Lord freed a much abused people. (3)

8. The number of pieces of silver proffered to a woman, by several men, to find the source of great *strength* in a certain Nazarite. (2)

9. If the sting of death is sin, what is the *strength* of sin. (1)

10. Something figuratively set before those having little *strength*, but who remained true to the word and name of Jesus? (2)

11. The point of contact made with a lame man that caused feet and ankle bones to receive *strength*? (2)

12. That which some may be able to increase by reason of *strength*, but will be accompanied with labor and sorrow. (4)

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

R. Erisman