

The Gospel Standard



“Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people,” Isa. 62:10

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The Gospel Standard, July/August, 2012 Issue

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Editorial

Where Is the Salt?

This issue deals with Christians as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. These two qualities are clearly set forth in many ways, under different headings. Salt is the preserving power of the earth. That figure tells us that we are to, not only offer that which is attractive, but also that which preserves. For example, many presumptions have been made about when the end of time shall come. Some sage, cautious people have suggested that when men reach the stage in time when they refuse to repent, that God will end the material universe. I suppose if people are going to speculate, that is this is as good as any other speculation.

Jesus said in Matthew chapter five, verse 13: “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor (taste) wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men.” When the salt lost it’s flavor (taste), then it had lost its strength, and was good neither for flavoring, nor for preserving. Just what relationship does this have with Christianity in our modern world?

We see in our society, the growing boldness and aggressiveness of sinners in living as they please. They are sinning wherever they please. As a result more and more Christians are retreating into a semi-secluded arrangement. In this way they do not have to confront a lot of the sinful dispositions, which are aggressively seeking confrontation. But Christians can not be hermits! We must be, as much as we can, among the people.

Not only has homosexuality come out of the closet, it has gone outside the house and shouted to the heavens its presence. It has claimed validity as a way of life. It now has collected political clout to help make the case for it. For more than fifty years in our country, homosexuality has been publicly known for its ability to siphon large donations from big businesses and industry in order

to bankroll its continuing encroachment into various areas of life. Like many other special interest groups, acceptance is not the goal. ***Dominion is the goal.*** Until they dominate religion, and the social scene, they shall not be satisfied.

Other special interest groups have come to pressure out of politicians what they wish, until they dominate the social culture of our country. Unwed mothers are known to be having as many as twenty babies in order to draw huge welfare checks (some, much more than a hundred thousand dollars a year) so they can live in luxury under the notion that it is government money which maintains their way of life. **It is our money.** It was their outcry which prompted President Johnson's actions bringing about this situation in 1967. Government does not have money. It only has what it takes from us in the form of taxes, tariffs, and other forms of collections.

Where has the voice and presence of Christians been during the past half century when all this, and much more has been taking place? I will tell you where many, whose voices have not been heard, have been. They have been in various places such as: (1) A boat which one is not allowed to rock. (2) With their heads in the sand denying that much change has been taking place. (3) Among Pacifists who do not believe in war, especially a war of words. (4) They have been among the rock-throwers aimed at what they call "Fighters" who raise their voices protesting ungodliness in every location. (5) They have been at ease in churches among fellow pacifists who think that by making the gospel only positive and palatable to the sinners, that sinners will knock the doors to churches down to get in. Uh-Huh! A lot of door hangers are looking for business.

The negative can be overdone. It can be made destructive where even the friends of truth are frustrated in their efforts to teach truth. On the other hand, one can ignore all the negatives in the

gospel of Christ and get it less than half right when dealing with sin and sinners. Some even have the idea that we can not tell a person they are a sinner until we first convince them that we love them. Why would we even attempt to reach out to others, if there is no love there in the first place? Convincing others that we love them can sometime take so long that they are dead before we get around to mentioning the gospel to them. What then?

Where are those who are willing to stick their necks out in order to reach sinners with the gospel of Jesus. While many preachers use Facebook merely for social purposes to have fun, some are filling up their pages, and the pages of others who are willing, with the gospel of Christ. There are people who will listen to the negative if the one presenting the negative will do it with humility, and respect for others as obvious traits of character. This preacher is not ashamed, nor afraid to ask one who has a different belief than I, “Will you accept a free ebook, and also let me know of anyone else who would like some of the same?” I write books to educate, not to flail people, using the books as a cudgel. But there are some negatives in them. To stay with truth, the negatives must be kept in place; and that place is not in the grave. The proper place is in the proper array with the rest of Scriptures.

But, to turn a bit more negative, we ask: Why is the voice of God’s people in circumstances and times such as today, always the small, still voice? Why do we “shout” in such low whispers? Why is it that the leaders are often those who stand in the way and prevent opposition from being raised to all the sinful matters floating around in our society? I will tell you why! We have raised a generation of those who hate what they call fighters. Actually they call those who use the negative to any noticeable degree, fighters. They are negative only about those who are negative. They just do not want to be negative toward any unbeliever, and they will not support the negative teaching needed. Why? Because negative

statements must often be defended, and we have reared a generation of nitwits who just don't want to be bothered.

Why have we allowed abortion to be used to murder more than fifty million children in our society during my lifetime, and no real action has been taken by Christians other than to remain within four walls and speculate about what will happen if such is allowed to continue. Why are Christians somehow too good to carry a sign, write to congress people, and object in the local newspapers against such shameful legislation as often happens, and in general show little sign of life in objecting to what a majority, including non-religious people, believe is a drift away from morally safe ground? Not all non-Christians are bad people morally. Many, in fact, are turned off toward churches because of the laxity seen in most churches toward immorality. They are apparently of higher morals than some churches.

Why are so many churches so deeply involved in trivial matters while babies are being murdered who are still in the womb; when the raping of the young, tender minds of elementary school children is occurring, making them into robotic Socialists, and many Christians are not even aware of what is happening to their young children. When a young third grader is being brainwashed about political philosophy, we can rest assured that there are also forces at work which will alter their use of their bodies in order to gain sexual pleasures early in life. When condoms are given to students, and birth control measures are taught them so they can have sex without worry, what do you think will happen to them? In all of this, where are the Christians?

Yes, they are so busy having fun, playing games, and getting rich that such mundane things as these no longer affect their concerns. Oh, we will leave the activism to groups who can hire someone to carry their signs and boycott business, and other such things beneath our dignity. I will tell you my good friends, there will not

be much dignity in hell! You can call this statement judgmental if you wish, but when Christians ignore the things that will destroy society, and cause all the participants to go to hell, those who refuse to get involved in order to try to make a difference, are refusing aid to those who are already lost, and to those who will become lost without the proper help and influence in spiritual matters.

Let me illustrate this. I know a very capable couple. They could write letters to editors; to congress people, to business people, and along with others make a big difference in the way things are going in our country. Instead, like multitudes of other who call themselves Christians, they are so preoccupied with pleasures, recreation, sports, having fun with their grown children, getting rich, and a number of other activities, that they do not want to even listen to what is happening to, and in, our country. One day, they will wake up! But too late. When our society is completely destroyed, and opportunities to worship and serve God are no longer listed among our freedoms, what will happen to their children then? What will happen to them? When doors to our churches are closed because of some pretext by government that churches have committed hate crimes, have been guilty of crimes against the state, and have violated the rights of others by disagreeing with them, what then?

Where are those who have the faith to stand up and speak up for Christ, his gospel, and his way of life? Who are those who will be counted among the ones who are trying to make a difference in our society? When those who offer self-righteous claims of being right and can't be wrong, turn a deaf ear to the gospel itself, it makes us wonder: where is the salt today. For about four months I have been pleading, begging, admonishing for simple, no-cost help in some things anyone can do in a couple of hours each month, and during the course of four or five years probably make a vast difference in who shall eternally live with the Father in heaven, and those who

continue in their ways of rebellion against God in the here and now. How many have responded? Ha. Compared to the ones asked, precious few. Can you visualize a row of computers, each one dedicated a one letter of our alphabet, in sending ebooks to those interested in going to heaven? I can, but how many are willing to help me gather that many email addresses? I have not reached the capacity of one computer yet?

On the other hand I deeply appreciate all those who do; who have responded to such pleas. I am grateful to know a few who are desperately trying to make a moral difference in this world, and they shall! I am grateful for that brave minority who say, "I know I am exposing my throat and I may be badly hurt as a result, but I shall do it anyway." Yes, I am blessed with many good friends and brave acquaintances, but on the other side of the fence sits the indifferent majority, and that is what frustrates me to no end. Tell me please, what I can do that I am not already doing to activate and motivate as many as I can to *participate* in Christianity and make a difference in this world.

If you are, or claim to be, a part of those who are said by Christ to be the salt of the earth, where is your preserving power? Have you lost your flavor as a child of God? If we who are disciples of Christ are supposed to be the salt of the earth, where is the evidence that we are preserving anything worthwhile in our society. I am not interested in short term postponements. I am interested in hearing about what we have actually preserved. Salt of the earth, let me hear it from your lips.

LIGHT

Melvin Elliott

In Matthew 5:14-16 Jesus said: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a

candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

The importance of light is shown by the absolute necessity of light for the existence of humanity: physically, culturally and especially for his spiritual welfare. This is proven in the physical realm in that the first thing God did in the creation was to bring light into existence. In Genesis 1:3-4: “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.” Without light, the universe, as we know it, could not exist.

We could spend more time discussing the properties of light than this total lesson will allow so I hope you study the word and its different usage in the scriptures. The English word light is translated from a number of Greek words, most of them closely related. The differing words indicate a lamp, torch, enlighten, shine, splendor and other things. In the physical world, light illuminates objects and enables the eye to discern form, movement, essence, location, color and other properties.

It is also used to describe our characteristics. You can be light hearted, meaning free from care or light headed, meaning physically dizzy or mentally thoughtless. English words describing light in its various usages are bright, beaming, brilliant, effulgent, glowing, incandescent, radiant, resplendent and shining. These words can be used literally or figuratively to refer to personality or intelligence. The thing I want to emphasize; in the Scripture, light always refers to qualities that are essential for our spiritual welfare. It is also necessary that we let these qualities radiate to influence others for good.

The word light is used in the scriptures some 236 times to indicate a variety of things including the opposite of darkness, ignorance, wickedness and everything opposing righteousness. This word has both physical and spiritual applications and the physical is often used to illustrate the spiritual. Of physical light and darkness, Genesis 1:5: "And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day." The word light, it is also used to refer to Deity, truth, the gospel, righteousness, teachers of truth, understanding, mental perception, characteristics of the spiritual life and of other related things. Darkness is the opposite and is used of Satan and of all that make up his kingdom that stands opposed to spiritual light. As always, the context shows us the usage, whether it refers to the physical or metaphorically of the spiritual. To get the exact meaning of the word in Scripture, we must look very closely to the context. We might sum the matter by saying that all that pertains to or leads in the direction of that which is righteous, is spoken of as light.

The word is used literally and metaphorically in many ways in connection with, or in combination with other words. As we illustrated before, light headed or light hearted. So it is with its usage in the scriptures; it is often connected to other words and can have a variety of shades of meanings in keeping with the context. One of the more prominent original words translated light is phos (foce). It is translated fire twice where Peter warmed himself by the fire. Four times it is translated Light with a capitol L as a name of Deity. Sixty six times it is translated light as in our text and in John 1:4: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." Also, in John 8:12: "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

We could list other passages to show that in the spiritual realm, light is used to refer to the whole concept of God. In I John 1:5: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and

declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” Here the word is used to describe his being, his character, his work and all that is good in the universe. It is especially used to characterize his word and all of its benefits. II Corinthians. 4:4: “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” It is also used to characterize those who live in harmony with the light of Deity; who follow truth, righteousness and justice. All spiritual life is attributed to the light of God. In John 1:4-5: “In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.” Darkness cannot overcome light but light overcomes darkness so this is why Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” We will return to this statement later.

By implication, there is a principle implied in these passages that is often overlooked: We have to be light before we can be, “...[T]he light of the world.” Contextually, in order to be light one has to be poor in spirit, one who mourns, one who is meek, one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness, one who is merciful, one who is pure in heart, one who is a peacemaker and one who can endure unjust persecution. These are the qualities of deity. In Luke chapter one, Zacharias points out some eternal truths in this matter. Speaking of Jesus in Luke 1:77-79; “To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

This is stated in fulfillment of Psalm 107:9-10 and is the summation of all the benefits that we received through Jesus. The main point is; this one that is to come would give spiritual light to those in darkness. Now in John 8:12; “Then spake Jesus again unto

them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” In these words Jesus shows that in his person, he is the fulfillment of all the prophecies of the blessings of the coming Messiah. However, the Pharisees accused Jesus of being witness to his self but by using this expression, Jesus showed he had the witness of the prophets. His miracles also testified of him and finally, his death, burial and resurrection removed all doubt as to who he was. He was and is, very Son of God, the giver of the light of life.

The question is; if Jesus is the light of the world, how can we be the light of the world? To be this, demands that we have the character of Jesus. How can this be? As we showed before, it is by becoming, one who is poor in spirit, one who mourns, one who is meek, one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness, one who is merciful, one who is pure in heart, one who is a peacemaker and one who can endure unjust persecution. These are the qualities of Deity. When we make the characteristics of Deity ours, we do not become Deity but we are one with Deity or we possess the nature of Deity. Paul explains this in Galatians 2:19-20: “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

The characteristics of Christ lived in Paul as Paul lived in harmony with the faith, the source of all spiritual light. Paul further expands on this in Galatians 5:22-25: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” To live in the spirit is to put to death the things of the carnal mind and conduct our self after the things of the spirit, the new heart or disposition, that we learned from the beatitudes. This is being

spiritually minded that is life, Romans 8:5-6. Now for the passage that shows this is the case, look in I John 1:7: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” It is by walking in the light, in the same manner that Jesus walked in the light, that we also become light of the world.

In case we might have missed the point, we need to specifically state, all spiritual light, truth and revelation from God comes through the Scripture and in no other way. It follows, if you hold any belief that is not in perfect harmony with Scripture, you are not of the light of life nor an example of the light of God for others to follow. Speaking of Jesus, Paul stated in II Timothy 1:9-11; “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.”

The fact that we are the light of the world brings a great responsibility upon us. We need to look again at the concluding statement of Jesus. “A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel...” You don't set a city on a hill to hide it; it cannot be done. The word cannot means that you are absolutely without the power to do so. “Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel...” You set on fire a candle or lamp in order for it to give light, it must be set on a lamp stand for it to illuminate the area. It is impossible for it to give light if it is under a container.

The admonition or responsibility for us is, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” The idea is, even so or in like manner,

to let our light shine. This phrase points backwards to the lamp stand so like one sets the lamp on the lamp stand or the city set on a hill, we are to let our light shine. You shine a light to see other objects and not yourself. So, our light is to shine so one will see the Father. We don't shine our lights but let it so shine, i.e., by adopting the beatitudes and living in harmony with them, we honor the Father and show his goodness to the world. Again, as Paul said, "...I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me..." In the context of Matthew 5, the Father lives in us when we let the characteristics of God rule us by living in harmony with the beatitudes. It is in this way our light shines: the Father is radiated before the world.

You and I must not hide our light. Although we don't shine it, we let it shine. One who lives in harmony with the teaching of God will naturally stand out and be noticed. And may I say, the darker the night, the brighter the light shines if it is the true light. The world has such a distorted view of Christianity that the true example stands out all the more. Although the person hardened in wickedness may not, and most of the ungodly will never admit it and may even make fun of you, they do see genuine Christianity for what it is and they secretly admire such people.

When we let our light shine, what are we to radiate to those who are watching? First, it is not to be some physical peculiarity, a peculiar garb that stands out among the usual. Second, neither is it by some trashy look of the rebellious against decency and decorum. The light of the Christian is to shine naturally and unavoidably because of the character, conduct and good works (the total person) of the one who is governed by the spirit and rule of God. We must not follow the customs of the world and obscure that light.

In Acts 4:13: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had

been with Jesus.” They were able to see the likeness of Jesus in their life and deportment. The life of Jesus was summed up in these words, “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.” (Acts 10:38) Christ lived in such a way that he honored God. Therefore, our light must shine in such a way, not to call attention to ourselves, but to the Father.

The apostle Peter, toward the close of his first letter said, “To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” (I Peter 5:11) As far as Holy Writ is concerned, he closed his second letter with his last recorded words with this summation. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." (II Peter 3:18)

What a privilege to be light so that the glory of God can be seen in all those who will order their lives after the teaching of our Master. As far as I know the author, of these following words, is unknown but they set forth the sentiment of this great privilege. "Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me, All his wonderful passion and purity: O my Savior divine, All my being refine, Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me." May it ever be so!

Finally, I Peter 1:13-15: “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” Are you in this manner letting your light shine?

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Pass the Salt, Please

Charles A. Pledge

A phrase commonly heard at mealtime in former years, “Pass the salt please,” echoed around the tables of households. Salt was in ancient times, and still today is used as a food preservative. Although still used to some degree in that way, modern times has turned it chiefly into a taste altering substance. There are two basic kinds of table salt; sea salt and the rock salt, or common salt. There are various sorts of rock salt, depending on the processing it gets when mined.

The ancients before, during and after the days of Christ on earth used salt chiefly as a preserving mineral. Pickling salts; brine pickles, and various other vegetable preserving processes depend upon salt to preserve food. When I was young, salt was the pork preservative of choice, but various other methods were also known. However, among the poor in depression days, salt was the cheaper, more dependable method of preserving fresh pork. This is the chief factor we wish to keep before you in this article.

Matthew records the words of Jesus in chapter 5:13, “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men.” If the salt has lost its savor, it is good for nothing.” Savor has reference to flavor; taste in the literal, and often in the figurative sense. This is a good way, and also the most effective way of saying that if the salt has lost its power/strength, it is good for no use at all, but to be cast out and trod into the ground to prevent excessive dust in that spot. When the salt loses its taste, we know the strength of it is gone; it will not preserve anything.

We are accustomed to an expression, “The salt of the earth.” That has reference to the down to earth type person; a person known for

honesty and integrity; one whose influence is practical and helpful. Jesus describes an aspect of discipleship which is absolutely essential to being a disciple; a child of God. This is also one of the characteristics which in more recent decades has been pushed into the background by many would be disciples.

In talk, we often hear disciples use expressions which are very close, if not altogether in principle on a level with the world's thinking and talk. It is not at all uncommon to hear Deity (God; in the English language, God merely means deity) used in vain, or common, ordinary ways. God is to be revered, and a loss of reverence means a loss of God. That is the first step God tells us the Gentile world took in turning their backs upon him, Romans 1:21. Yet the name Jesus is often used as an expletive, or a word used to fill up space. Beyond being profane: "the treating of the holy as if it is common," it is sometimes used as a substitute for a cuss word, and is viewed as one. Both Jesus and the Father are so used. The most common perhaps is, "Oh my x."

Even if not intended as more than an expletive used to cover up either laziness, or ignorance, or both, it is sinful. God gave the Israelites a specific command: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain." Exodus 20:7. Vain means: "Devoid of real value, worth, or significance; idle, unprofitable, useless, worthless; of no effect, force, or power; fruitless, futile, unavailing." (**Oxford English Dictionary, 20 Vol. Set**) In short, any use of a word which is unnecessary is a vain use. If a word has no real value in a sentence, then it is devoid of significance, or worth. It is vain. God told his people to use His Name only when it was necessary to the understanding, or value of the statement. Someone objects that this is a command given only to Israel.

Hold on! Remember Romans 1:21: "Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but

became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” The first step away from God is irreverence; a lack of proper reverence toward God. A lack of reverence is always accompanied by acts of lack of reverence. Why? Speech is an act, and if one act prevails, you can rest assured that the heart has been invaded by a lack of reverence. The condition of the heart exists before the act which reveals it is committed. Only when the conscience has been hardened sufficiently will one dare make public what is in the heart and life already. Jesus stated it in this way in Matthew chapter twelve, verses 34-35: “O generation of vipers, how can ye being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.” Consequently when we hear words habitually spoken, we know that the foundation of those words is the condition of the heart of the one uttering them. We have to make allowances for the possibility of a slip of the tongue of one who has been around people who speak in a certain way, to be influenced by them to the point they may allow the influence to slip out in rare instances. But when it becomes habitual, we know the words are coming from the heart of the one speaking them.

Before one takes offence at this, remember that it is written for your admonition with the hope it will enable each one who heeds, to draw closer to God and to have greater assurance. Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians in Colossians 4:6: “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” With grace means to make the speech as palatable as possible without compromising anything, and the words with as much preserving strength as possible. That means no expletives; make it as compact and full of strength as possible regarding truth. Let us make this even more practical so no one will misunderstand it.

The next time you are tempted to use the name of God, of Jesus, of the Holy Spirit, of heaven, of Holy Scripture, or any holy, sacred thing or person, ask this question: is the use necessary to the understanding of the fact? Certainly expressions such as: “Oh my X; L....., L.....; lol,” and other like expressions are totally unnecessary, and often are regarded by hearers as only a substitute for cursing and swearing. The use of the name Jesus alone as an expletive, is most certainly a substitute for what some consider harsher uses of Deity. But they each reflect an *irreverence* for the eternal Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jokes involving sacred matters, including heaven, are irreverent jokes. On one occasion three preachers were having lunch together. One of the preachers told a short joke about heaven. The other began an immediate response. The third preacher interrupted and said, “If you are going to tell profane jokes, I will excuse myself, and you can continue. But I am not going to sit here while you tell them.” The other two looked as if they had been slapped in the face by the third preacher. They ceased their profane jokes, but it was obvious they smarted for several days under the admonition. Just because the world is irreverent is no excuse for God’s children following that example. If we even go along quietly with such practices among ourselves, we encourage by our silence the practice. We may not be able to affect groups of non-Christians by a rebuke, but we do not have to remain in the presence of such practices by anyone. And most certainly we can, and should object when those who profess to be Christians insist on doing it in our presence. If we truly love each other, we will want to exhort and admonish each other; and, yes, even rebuke when necessary.

Paul wrote to the Roman Christians and told them in chapter twelve, verses 1, 2: “I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not

conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Paul presents two actions, one contrasting with the other, In verse one the pleading is to offer their lives (bodies) a living sacrifice unto God. This is not a comparison with the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament, but by way of contrast, our whole life is to be laid upon the altar of Jesus (Hebrews 13:10) unto God. Nothing reserved. All of it is to belong to God through Christ our altar. By way of contrast, he said in the first part of verse two: “And be not conformed to this world.” To be conformed is to be made like the mold in which we find self, or to be made conformable. We often hear it said, “Don’t let the world press you into its own likeness.” However, “not be conformed” is in the imperative sense. One may argue over the meaning of this sense since it is used in four different ways in the Greek, but one thing which is irrefutable is that it identifies the subject of the verb. It here identifies the child of God as the one responsible for the action. It is literally, do not step into that mold, or likeness of the world. Each Christian has the responsibility to remain outside the form of the world. This simply means that whatever philosophy, or action, or attitude, or practice which belongs to this world by way of origin, keep away from; do not participate in it.

In order to do this, the remainder of verse two must be followed. But is a word set forth to contrast a word, expression, concept, or action. It is used here in the fullest sense. Whatever the form of the world produces in life, the renewing of the mind will produce the opposite and bring about the transformed life. To transform is to change the entire life. This means that everything about the Christian is the opposite of that which originates with the world. Every value is changed from the world’s values, to the values taught by God in His Word. It is that simple. Opposites. Opposites are not hard to recognize. But how is this accomplished? Be transformed is present passive in the Greek language here. Because of that, many attribute the transformation to God, thereby claiming that we have nothing to do with it. Wrong!

The word is so stated that way by Greek word authorities because it technically is passive. However, it is seen to be the direct result of the renewing process. That is why it is technically in the passive voice. However, it has the sense of the Middle Voice (the Middle Voice in the Greek; the English does not have this voice, shows that the subject of the verb is the one who must perform the action in order for the results to, in some way, find their way back to the subject) clearly demands the understanding, that the Christian who possesses the mind is the one who does the action of renewing. Consequently, the Christian who possesses the mind which is renewed by his/her efforts, is responsible also for the act of transformation. The object of this transformation is that we may prove/set forth by demonstration by the way we live, that the will of God is (1) good; it produces good in the life of the believer, and also abounds from there, to others around the believer. (2) acceptable, no decent mind can find any fault with the will of God which produces only good. Only the impure in mind can attribute to the will of God any impure thing. (3) And perfect/complete will of God. The will of God is seen by the demonstration in life to cover every aspect of life.

Christians must live in the world. We must associate with those who are of the world. But that does not mean in any sense of the word that we must become like those with whom we associate. It does emphasize however, that we ought to choose our associates carefully, with discernment, 1 Corinthians 15:33. We ought to emphasize the good, and especially our brethren, in our association. Christians can not; must not view themselves as hermits, and seclude themselves from all those outside the faith of Jesus. In doing that, we could never influence anyone for good. And that is how we must view ourselves; public exhibitions of God's will at work in our life.

Now, My Friends, Will You Please Pass the Salt?

By this we mean, let us pass on this preserving influence to others. This is basically why we are called the salt; to drive us on to fervently attempt to influence others for the cause of Christ and his

kingdom. To try to influence others to allow God to rule their hearts and lives as we ourselves have submitted unto him. If you have any doubt about the validity of this exhortation, please be sure to read the next article:

When the Salt Has Lost Its Flavor, and the Light Has Gone Out, What Then?

Charles A. Pledge

A sobering question is asked by the title of this lesson. It shall serve as a sobering certainty of what shall happen when, and if, that day arrives. That there shall be some Christians alive at the final day is without question a fact. Paul refers in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 to some who are alive when the Lord is revealed from the heavens. But how many is not stated; only that some shall be.

Believers have been in the majority only twice in the history of mankind. (1) When God created Adam and Eve, and before they sinned. (2) When the sinful flesh of the world was destroyed by the flood, leaving only Noah and his family on the ark saved from destruction. We, therefore, never expect the saved to be in a majority again this side of eternity. The next destruction shall be the destruction of this world when all the material universe shall be burned up by God, 2 Peter 3:9-12. But between then and now, what should we expect?

We all tend to view everything from our own limited experiences. Growing up as a lad in West Tennessee on a farm, I learned that experience was a pretty limited teacher, and revealer of things. Then later, in studying the Bible, I was impressed that God, in His revelation is the only one we can trust to give us a proper, and accurate view of things. Therefore, let us approach this question from the standpoint of what God says about it.

First, let us acknowledge the biblical fact that evil men shall wax worse and worse. Paul wrote to Timothy exhorting him to flee youthful lusts, but to follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:23.) In chapter three of the same writing, Paul warned Timothy of what to expect. The last days are the last age; the age of Christianity; this age.

The Jews had been taught to expect that when the Messiah came, there would be a golden age of peace, when all the enemies of the Lord would be subdued under his sword. The Messiah had come; Jesus of Nazareth. But his sword is the word of God, and those subject to him are subject in the heart, and his rule governs their life, bringing into being spiritual qualities of life. Paul warns his young fellow evangelist that he should not fall prey to the concept that the golden age would exist and all would be a lovely scene of physical peace, and prosperity. Rather, giving an explicit case of what Timothy knew about, and what was rather common, Paul brings this to a temporary end in chapter three, verse 13 by saying, “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” In other words, Timothy, do not expect the world overall to grow any better; it will only get worse.

Does this mean then that the way of God has failed? Absolutely not! It means that men have failed to make the full application of the teaching of the Lord to their life. It means that many people have not applied the teaching of the Lord fully to themselves in order to become what God wants all men to be. It may also mean, that in this failure, they have influenced others to fail. But that faults man, not God. God offers mankind the perfect solution, not only for the remedy for sin, but also the remedy for living the life God desires in each of us. If man does not accept it, and fully apply it to life, that is not God’s fault. It is the fault of those of mankind who fail.

Second, we need to accept the fact that no matter what others may do, or say, that some people just have the bent of mind to listen

only to what will please and satisfy their fleshly lusts. That is the carnal mind, Romans 8:5. It is the mind devoted to satisfying the fleshly lusts. It can change, but the desire to change must lie within the individual. Until that desire comes, any effort from without shall meet with failure. However, we never know what catalyst will trigger a desire to change. Their only hope is to see, when that desire to change is present, the salt of the earth, and the light of the world at work. It is that small window of time, perhaps a few hours, a few days, or however short lived it is, that the salt of the earth and the light of the world has the opportunity to do its work. Once that desire leaves, it may never return. Preparation; a state of readiness; a willingness to be useful at any moment, is absolutely necessary on the part of those who are the salt and the light. And the salt and light must be visible from a practical viewpoint. The one desiring a change to the better must have seen it in the life of those whom God would use as instruments of change in that life. If the salt has lost its flavor, and is not working, it is useless. If the light has gone out, or grown too faint to be seen, then it serves no worthwhile purpose. Acceptance of this fact must be accepted along with the second fact.

Third, acceptance of individual responsibility must be present. They this, and they that, is not the way Christianity works. Christianity is an individual discipleship multiplied many times over in the life of individuals. Christianity is merely the reflection of Jesus Christ in the life of the individual who has been baptized into the death of Jesus, there crucified with him, then arisen to clothe oneself in the character of Jesus the Christ, Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27; Galatians 2:20. I, as a child of God, do not have the luxury of relying upon my brethren to step up and take my place when I am absent from duty. They can't do that when the lost are looking to me for an example in life.

Each of us must realize that when the time comes in a person's life that they wish to change, and they know me well enough to know that I claim to be a Christian, there is no one else who can replace me. If my life has not been as a child of light, and as the salt of the

earth in preserving power (righteous living), then they may have no hope; no one else to whom they can turn for encouragement and help in becoming a child of God. Now, with that realization, let us look briefly at light and its consequences.

(1) Light enlightens our path in order to show us where to go, Psalm 119:105; 119:130. It is the word of God which does that. Christians have an obligation to be wise in the word, Ephesians 5:17. This wisdom will enable us to apply the knowledge of God in our own life, but will also help us help others who wish to incorporate it into their life. He who walks apart from the word of God walks in darkness. He who speaks contrary to the word of God speaks out of darkness. Isaiah put it this way: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” If not light, then darkness.

(2) Light makes manifest, Ephesians 5:13. All things which need to be rebuked (Ephesians 5:11), are shown to be in that need by the light. In this context in Ephesians we have light and darkness contrasted; one the way of Satan, the other the way of God. God’s way is always defined, described, and set forth in the word of God as the good way. It is not found intuitively; but only through the written word of the living God. Consequently, we who are the children of light (those who do the works of one are the children of that one, cf. John 8:34-47), are those who do the works of light. Since it is by the word of God that light comes, Psalm 119:130, then it is by the word of God that we learn what the works of light are, and how to do them. This stands in contrast to the ways of darkness when the only instruction is the philosophy, and the way of the world. This way is the way of Satan, the Prince of darkness.

(3) Walking in the light then is nothing more than walking in the commandments of the Lord. It is in this way that we demonstrate what the will of God is, Romans 12:2. It is in this way that we set forth to the world the joys of serving God, 1 John 5:3. It is in this way that we honor the God of heaven and earth by setting forth to all our purpose for living, Ecclesiastes 12:13. It is in this way that

we demonstrate to all that we are of God, by hearing the words of the apostles of Christ, 1 John 4:1-6.

Light or Darkness: a Simple Choice

Now, as we draw toward a conclusion, let us imagine that you and I are lost, in a world of darkness so dense that we can only grope our way around. We each at the same time decide that this kind of life is not worth living. It produces only misery, and a longing for something better. We want out of it. We have heard in the past that there is a better way. That way is called Christianity. Those who practice it are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

We begin groping our way around in the darkness looking for that light and that salt. We encounter those in the same condition as we are and they claim that they once knew a Christian, a child of light. They lived just past Never, Never Land in a place called Good Hope. We struggle and grope our way through the blinding darkness until we come to Good Hope. We begin inquiring, until finally we come upon the one who claimed to be a Christian. We look, but we see only darkness, with an occasional flicker. We search, but we see no influence which would serve for any eternal good. What have we found? Only more darkness? Where is our hope? We do not know which way to turn. What shall we do?

Now, do you see the plight of the world when we allow our light to grow dim, or go out altogether. What help are we to others who look for an example if our salt is good only to be thrown out and trampled under foot. If we refuse to live an honorable life of integrity and faith, then we shall live in the darkness and suffer the fate of the children of darkness.

If we grow too busy with matters other than those eternal matters, to pay proper attention to being the salt of the earth and the light of the world, what hope do others have who know no other person than us, who might help direct them to the light?

Although the economy of this country is still ailing, and will probably be so for some time, many of God's children are well blessed materially. It is said that at the judgment bar, the Lord will have three questions to ask of his disciples concerning money. (1) How did you get it? Was it honestly come by? (2) What was your attitude toward it while you had it? (3) How did you use it? Were you very generous with it in using it to honor God, by lifting up his holy name among mankind. Were you rich in those works which God's word called good?

This writer is not against recreation, sports, enjoyment of pleasures, etc. But we do see an abuse of time and money being used on these, while at the same time efforts made to reach the lost often suffer very hard times, and distinct setbacks, due to lack of funds. This is a very serious problem that ought not to be.

Eternal misery, disappointment, and agony awaits all who die in darkness in that lost and undone state. If they had an opportunity to see our light, and observe our salt at work, but there was no light, and there were no preserving examples, does that not mean that we also are in darkness alongside them? Brethren, is it not time for a wholesale renewal of mind and life? Is it not time for a transformation to be worked by that renewal of the mind? Let us lay aside every hindrance and every sin, and looking unto Jesus work while it is today, for the night of death comes when no man can work. Let us renew our minds daily lest that light flicker, and then go out. Let us daily mind those things eternal lest we fail to be the salt of the earth; that preserving power in our corner of the world.

Let us be urgent in life, remembering that "Today is the day of salvation..." (2 Corinthians 6:2.) Tomorrow may be that night of death when work is no more. _____

Memorials

Those who give memorial gifts do a two fold service and honor to the one given in memory of. First, there is the honor or public remembrance. It declares that one was of a character worthy of remembrance. Second, it enables others to have an opportunity to read gospel teaching by means of supporting this paper with the gifts. The person being remembered is the occasion of good work being done.

A gift was sent by Melvin and Jean Elliott in memory of **Alice Camm**.

May the remembrance produce eternal flowers that never lose their bloom.

The Parting Word

We need to begin immediately raising funds for the special issue. Some have already given extra_funds. We shall try to work up a close estimate in the next few days to see about what we will need. A rough estimate in distributing six thousand copies of 40 pages per copy is approximately \$8,500.00. This is approximately 1.34 cents per copy total; printing, mailing, envelopes, packaging, etc.

The next issue (September/October) shall be on Calvinism. We already have the material planned which shall be used. It is a matter of writing what we have planned to use. This will be a different approach than what we have seen in the past. We shall attack the foundations of Calvinism instead of the peripheral approach.

Calvinism is a theology spanning from eternity through time to eternity. Few people recognize that Calvinism is that thorough in its doctrines. I know of not one passage of Scripture which has not been perverted, or drastically changed to uphold the theology of

Calvinism. We could spend a lifetime attacking the various false doctrines of Calvinism, and die not halfway through. But if we destroy its foundations, they have no arguments left. The foundations are what we shall deal with. Any peripheral argument shall not cause us to be detracted from our main purpose.

Calvinism is an old theology with many of its tenets reaching back into the fourth century, and a few back into the days of Gnosticism. However, the doctrines awaited John Calvin of Geneva Switzerland, founder of the Presbyterian Church, to write them into systematic theology, thereby popularizing it. Because it was through his writings that the doctrines were popularized around the world, that it was dubbed Calvinism. Baptists and others have modified its tenets a great deal. Most today who teach its tenets do not know the source of them. They only know that they were taught them by sincere people and they in turn pass them on.

It is important that we identify the source of these tenets in order for people to awaken to what they really believe and make a choice whether to continue to believe them, or to study their way out of those beliefs. We trust that this shall be only one of the benefits of this special issue.

We look forward to getting this issue out, and earnestly seek your financial help, your prayers, and your encouragement.

As we have asked before, send us an email address of any person whom you know to hold these beliefs. If you can't obtain their email address, send us their physical address. Either way, but preferably the email address, will help us get the material into the hands of those who can be profited. Email attachments help lower the cost drastically.

C.P.