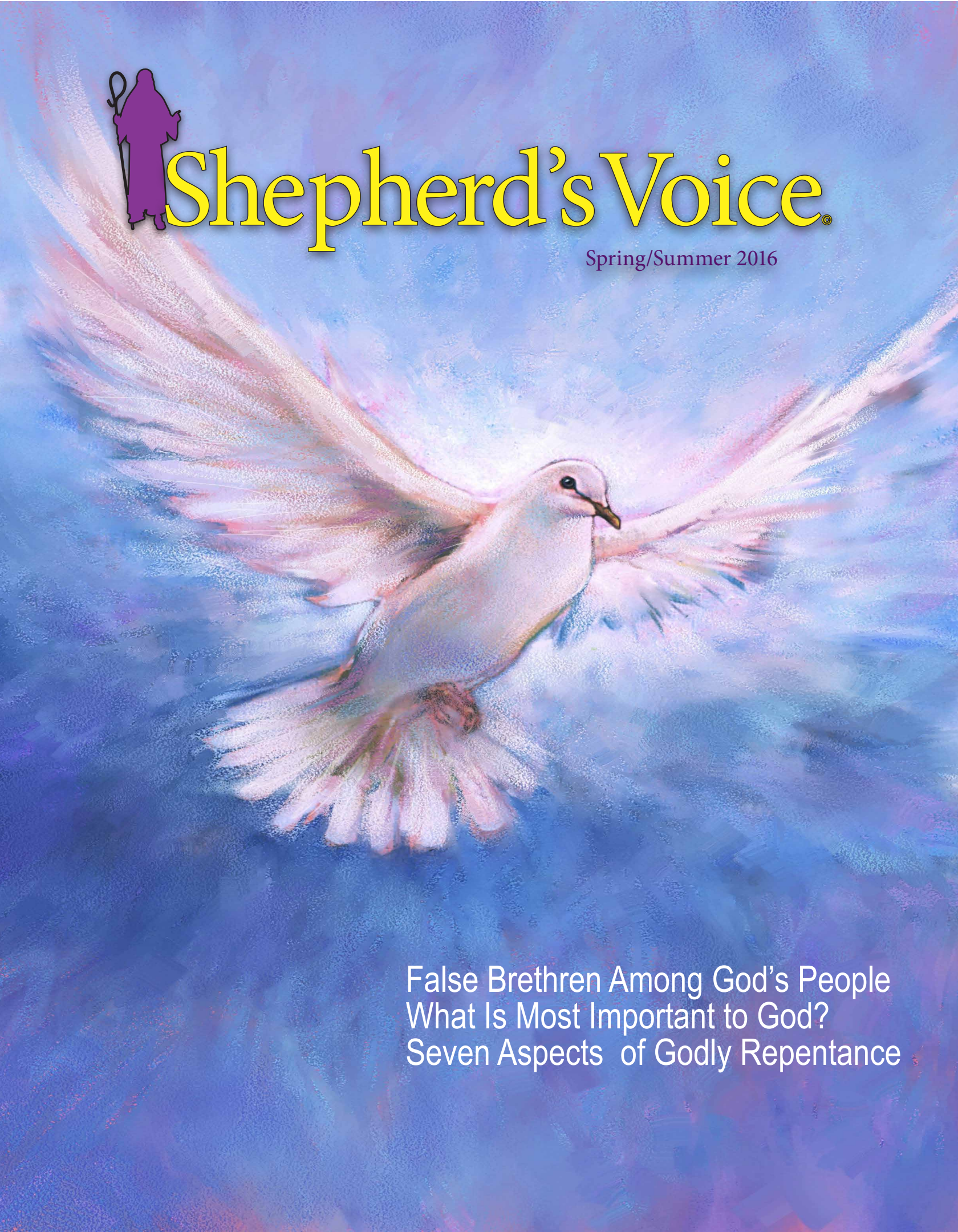




Shepherd's Voice.®

Spring/Summer 2016



False Brethren Among God's People
What Is Most Important to God?
Seven Aspects of Godly Repentance

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Greetings!

In a recent conversation I had with an elder from Canada's west coast, we discussed our front row witness to certain events in local congregations that led to division and hurt. These were encounters with church members that had sown seeds of discord in fellowships where they had gained influence to further an agenda.

In particular, we reflected on how these things seem to occur even in the smallest of groups, where one would normally believe that our Adversary would be paying less attention. On the contrary, we recognized that small groups led by the Spirit are prime targets; they have great potential.

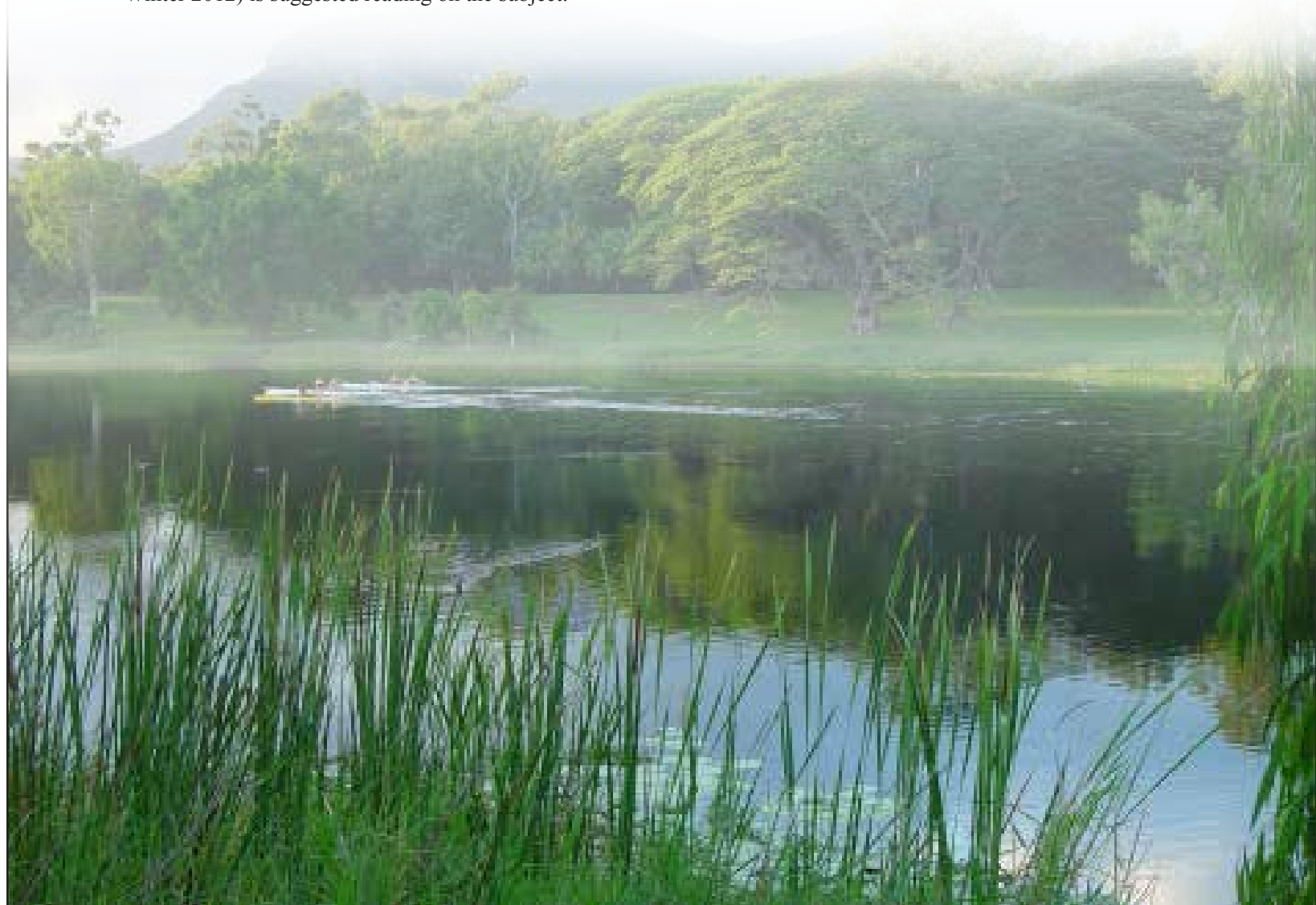
Jesus Christ and the New Testament writers warned us of liars that would come into our midst. The scriptures indicate that the Devil could plant them, or they could be brethren who corrupt themselves by succumbing to his evil suggestions. These individuals' activities attempt to undermine the faith once delivered to all and draw followers after themselves and their ideas. It is not as easy to detect such individuals and their activities as we might suspect, since their doctrines are largely the same. Discerning good from evil in these cases come from our senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:14); it is the guidance of the Holy Spirit for discernment when divisive people and issues are coming into the sheepfold. The past article Wrestling with Evil (SVM Winter 2012) is suggested reading on the subject.

Jude has some serious words for us in his epistle about the kinds of divisive persons we are talking about. The article, False Brethren Among God's People expounds on his epistle in a manner we hope will bring his message closer to home, and bring awareness to the believer the realities we face if we are to contend for the true faith.

Jude tells us how to contend for the faith as he wrapped up his brief message. What he says in concise words parallels another article in this issue: What is Most Important by Norm Edwards. Jude tells us to build yourselves up on our most holy of faith, which is not a process of learning and finding a congregation with correct doctrine, but about faith and works in God, and personal learning of who He is and living by His every word.

By the time of the release of this issue, the new SVM website (www.shepherdsvoicemagazine.org) will be well developed with many new features and accessibility to content. We want to thank Jeremiah Patton for his many hours of service and dedication as webmaster for this magazine since it began over five years ago.

In Christ's Service
Jim Patterson



FALSE BRETHREN
AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE



Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves (Matthew 7:15).

Jim Patterson

The Church of God does have its share of misguided individuals, to put it politely. Some of them remain on the fringes of the Church, perhaps well read and always ready to offer up an opinion. Others however are not so innocuous, looking to carve out their place in the Kingdom in advance at the expense of the Church.

Mainstream Christian churches also have such folk, so it is not necessarily a unique situation for the Sabbath keeping community. There are however more serious considerations for God's Church we need to examine if we are to be good stewards of the flock and ourselves. Satan is multifaceted in his methods and we should be "not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11) and he does have his servants embedded amongst God's people (2 Timothy 2:26). The stakes are much higher for God's elect.

This article is not necessarily about judging people who are mislead by their own imaginations of scripture or perhaps themselves. There has always been a degree of error in our interpretations of God and scripture, and error is something God can work with to correct. If one has an error in thinking it may not be normally warranted to reject a person as being divisive or a heretic (Titus 3:10), and it is not necessary to consider those who have differences with

suspicion or as a liability. We are not to have a black and white mindset, as there are various amoral matters we encounter in our walk with others. It appears evident from scripture that we are to judge how to identify if there is a disruptive element in our congregation or not and what to do to mitigate it if there is. We must also consider ourselves to see if we are contributing to a problem or being part of the solution. A little leaven leavens the whole lump, and congregations can be chronically debilitated or even decimated if there is no intervention.

A Look at Jude on this Subject

Jude takes the matter seriously in his epistle, and I would

not presume that Jude took any pleasure in his epistle's subject matter, which is predominantly negative. This author would rather write articles on more positive subjects, but having recently dealt with apostasy, this topic is very real and worthy of inclusion in SVM. We try not to shy away from these topics.

The "faith which was once delivered" (v 3) is not the "list of belief statements, doctrines and practices" to the saints once delivered as commonly assumed. It is not a call to defend a list of propositions, or a call for apologetics to unite. This interpretation may seem understandable given how God's tenets of worship have been maligned over the centuries, and over only the last number of years in some cases, from going from Sabbath and Holy Day observance and worship, to Sunday worship and observance of festivals of pagan origin.



Therefore, we need to understand the real scope of what Jude has in mind here in verse 3 as it will help make clear to us what follows. As always, a proper recognition of what is being communicated will give us a better sense of what we are to do with it. We cannot always fall back on our common assumptions that may be insufficient.

Contending for the faith is contending for our great hope in

God, His Person, His character, His love and mercy. It is contending for our love for God, and worshiping in Spirit and in Truth.

It is also contending for our love towards the brethren. It is knowing who He is and having confidence that He always acts in our own best interests. If we try to define it fully we will likely come up short, but it includes the life changing activity of God, aligning our hearts and minds to its moral imperatives with obedience to Christ.

Paul, in writing to the Colossians to oppose false Gnostic teachings, interprets it as follows:

For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power (Colossians 2:9,10).

The fullness that Paul speaks of is Jude's way of saying "once for all". Jude means faith in its fullness, for anything short of that is insufficient.

The faith we describe above is something we sometimes assume we "just have", but instead Jude tells us to earnestly contend for (Greek: *epagonizesthai*) it. The faith can be lost on us all the while we maintain and keep clean our tenets of doctrine, or just become lazy and lukewarm, hobbling forward in church life.

These things must be developing in the core of every believer if the doctrines we practice are going to be of any real benefit. If we ask ourselves why certain individuals with the same doctrines cannot fellowship together, the answer is generally not the doctrine, it is because the faith, hope and love are not the same. Division generally occurs when one wants to control or manipulate, or broker opinion, play politics; and these things occur in any number of ways, but this is not the Spirit of God at work.

Jude exhorts us to contend earnestly for this, but how do we contend earnestly for faith? We will get there but Jude first identifies the problem, and so will we. If we know more about what we are to oppose, we (if we are spiritual) will know more about what we contend for.

Help in Identifying the Problem

Satan's tactic was creating suspicion about God's character and care (i.e. *Has God indeed said ...? ... For God knows*—implying He is not forthcoming, Genesis 3:1, 5), not the doctrine of tree abstinence, to persuade Eve to eat of it. The lie was regarding God's inadequacy and lack of fairness regarding the place they were given. *We may not think that we could ever be persuaded to consider God inadequate in His provisions for us*, but many have. We are going to take a look as to how this occurs.

... who turn the grace of God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 4)

It is maligning the grace of God and the denial of God that is in condemnation. This is serious stuff! If our congregation has elements of this kind in its midst, we need to properly and prayerfully judge.

Nobody gets up in the morning and decides to turn the grace of God into lewdness and deny God (v. 4), then head on down to the store and buy "An Idiots Guide Start Up Apostasy". However, we are warned of apostasies and false teachers rising among us, so we really want to recognize how this actually plays out in God's Church today. Jude does give us historical examples to consider first. There are three groups and three individuals that are given.

We want to emphasize we need to come to terms with the reality there are errors or inadequacies in doctrine we hold on to, and we know our interpretations change over time. What we are driving at however is any sustained teaching or tactics of manipulation that undermines a person's faith in God's holy nature, His merciful capacity, and His laws are what are in view here.

Examples Some Ignore

The first group is the rebellious group at Kadesh Barnea, and their apostasy was rebellion against God's revealed will to them. They thought their case was directed at Moses and Aaron:

... and all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron ... (Numbers 14:2)

They certainly had what they believed were legitimate grievances, things that Moses and Aaron had done wrong. But it was evident for anyone who cared to see that God's miracles and teachings were coming through Moses—not themselves. So God rightly saw it as rebellion against Himself.

The second group identifies the ancient angelic rebellion. The nature of their rebellion is abandoning their place in creation where God had placed them, which evidently was

not sufficient in their assessment. After all, they were spirit beings with awesome ability. They were convinced of their reasons to rebel, at least at the time.

The third group represents a rejection of God laws. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah decided for themselves what was right and wrong and replaced God's laws with their own set of standards. They might have been living lip-service to God, but they were not doing His will!

All of these groups rejected God's care and promises, *and they felt their issues and agenda were entirely warranted given their circumstances.*

Then there are three individuals:

Cain had the ability to submit to God's will, but chose not to, deciding to assert his own perceived rights as an individual at the expense of another. This was a rejection of God, not Abel.

Balaam (v. 11) put his own selfish desires (greed for money) ahead of the needs of God's people. Perhaps the error of Balaam is the classic story of beginning well and ending poorly. Balaam's downfall was the desire for money and an openness to sensuality. Balaam was a teacher of God's people, who turned against them, because a foreign king offered him a handsome sum to do so. The modern Balaam is perhaps one who has a calling and starts out well, but compromises the message for the sake of retaining membership and income.

Korah: a presumptuous individual:

The story of Korah is found in Numbers. It may speak to the more common rebellious behavior we see in the Churches of God today.

Now Korah ... took men; and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown. They gathered against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt

yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?" (Numbers 16:1-4)

Korah was applying Exodus 19:6, which was written to all the children of Israel:

"And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Indeed, every Israelite could encourage others to know and practice the laws of God. They could serve each other in need; they could pray for each other; they could arbitrate their friend's disputes. They could all strive to be holy and blameless before God.

Korah's mistake was deciding that this teaching gave him the same kind of authority Moses and Aaron had. How did Moses and Aaron get their authority? From the teaching recorded in Exodus 19:6? No! God had worked with them for over 80 years, speaking to them directly and performing many miracles for them and through them. If Korah received the same kind of authority from God, he would not have to contend with Moses for it—he would know that he had authority from God and others would see it.

But like the angels who sinned in Jude 1:6, Korah and his companions of like mind, were unhappy living under the authority God has set in place and coveted power for themselves. They wanted authority that God had not given them, and for which they had to campaign and argue to get others to recognize.

Today, people within church groups use similar arguments in an effort to obtain authority for themselves. The New Testament contains many scriptures about the just and unjust use of authority. So, the person seeking power will frequently raise arguments, claiming that the authority of some is unjust and that they would use authority justly if they were so recognized.

They do not consider that the present leader of a congregation or ministry got there because God prepared him with years of work to raise it up. In other cases, a leader was asked to come by an overwhelming majority of brethren. They fail to recognize that shepherds must lead, which often

requires making unilateral decisions necessary to guide and protect those who are under their care, and this is their primary service. They would quote Matthew 20:25-30 in a manner that Korah interpreted Exodus 19:6 for himself. God gives His shepherds the spiritual wherewithal to feed and protect the sheep.

If a man really believes in their own heart that the authority in their religious group has departed from God and that now he is the rightful godly authority, there is no need to contend with anyone. All he needs to do is peacefully continue about the ministry that God is giving him, trusting that God will sustain him and it. But that is almost never what happens. Usually, the man wants to take some or all of the church and ministry that God has established through another.

So we have these examples, but examples are not beneficial if we fail in making a connection to the potential of our own rebellious behavior and the rebellious behavior rising up in others, which is what we are trying to do here. We should consider the Pharisees who thought so very well enough of themselves, that Jesus summed their thoughts for them:

"If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets ..."

But on the contrary, He admonishes them:

"Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt" (Matthew 23:30-32).

The Pharisees were so sure of themselves that they even presumed to have been on the side of righteousness in the days of the fathers and the prophets. They figured they would have taken a stone for them, but the reality is they would have been first in line to throw one.

So I suggest we not be so sure of ourselves either, as evidently some are, and have even garnered small and large followings. We are not

to assume that those of whom Jude speaks are necessarily unpopular either, as some have even found popularity amongst the Church. They have rejected God, though they feel they have only rejected "unworthy" authority which did not go along with their wishes.

Jude points this out to us by saying that even Michael the Archangel did not dare to even risk being presumptuous as to admonish Satan by his own rebuke, but left that to a higher Authority. Therefore we should not consider ourselves to be any wiser or so immune to what Jude characterizes in the examples he gives:

Likewise also these dreamers (delusional in their rationale) defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. (Jude 9).

I have found a repeated pattern in the church: certain individuals attempt to manipulate the thinking of people by planting seeds of doubt, particularly regarding church elders or those who are in a leadership role. This often starts by their inability to control someone and their work, which then resorts to character assassination and degradation of their work. Their methods come across very sincere, with all kinds of unverifiable facts, seeming to be in the best interest of the hearer. This is what Jude and Paul taught:

These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage (Jude 16).

Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19).

For those who play these kinds of politics in the church of God it is not necessary for themselves to consider their actions in light of scripture, they have set their own standards of righteousness, and their agenda is justification. The message of Jude warns us of such *brute beasts* (Jude 10)

As with the examples given in Jude, the issue is not doctrinal failure, but a

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What Is Most Important to God?

Norman Edwards

Reason for this Writing

This writer, now age 60, has studied the Scriptures extensively for most of his life. These admonitions from the Scriptures frequently come to mind:

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Matthew 4:4 and Luke 4:4 citing Deuteronomy 8:3). Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48).

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 7:1).

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen (2 Peter 3:18).

Each believer is independently responsible for making Christ his or her Master in every area of one's life. The process goes on for as long as each of us lives. It is also different for each believer. We receive different spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12). We do not all have the same ease or difficulty with each of life's struggles. Some are tempted in one area, some in another. Some excel in certain kinds of service—where others do not attempt it. And even though there are many lessons that all believers must learn, we do not learn them all in the same order. When we look at other believers, we cannot necessarily tell if they are growing, backsliding or have been “faking it” all along. Remember that none of the other apostles figured out that Judas was a traitor—even though John records in hindsight that Judas used to steal the money given to Jesus' ministry (John 12:6). We have not been commissioned to judge the spiritual status of other believers:

Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to

make him stand (Romans 14:4). Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God (1 Corinthians 4:5).

Nevertheless, when it is time to do God's work—to do acts of Christian service—then we must make decisions as to those with whom we will work. Should I work only with other believers who believe and practice only what I believe and practice? That would probably leave me working all alone. After 40 years of frequent Bible study, there is nobody else on Earth who has studied exactly the same subjects to the same degree. Similarly, I know there are many areas where others have studied but I have not.



I know I cannot possibly study everything of value before I die. So when it is time to organize a Feast of Tabernacles, produce a Christian magazine, help a church congregation organize or run a ministry to homeless people, who do I work with? It cannot be only people who know and do everything I know and do. It must be Christians who at least know and do what is most important. It is for this reason that this article is written. What does the Bible say is most important?

The Great Commandments

When Jesus was asked about the most important commandments, He gave this vital answer:

Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:35-40).

We can see from these verses that Jesus did give the lawyer an answer to his question—there were other times that He did not answer certain questions. Jesus was not constrained to keep His answer to a single commandment—he expanded it to two commandments. He could have gone on to give the Ten Commandments or a long list. But he chose these two. They are very similar to the summary given to the prophet Micah:

He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8).

The account is also told in Mark 12:28-34, where Mark adds, “Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’” Indeed, these commandments—broad principles—were declared the most important by Jesus Christ, and are the keys to bringing us into the Kingdom of God. Entering the Kingdom of God—receiving eternal life—is the most important thing we can do with our physical life. Without that, we will simply return to dust, as so many billions of people have done before us. When a lawyer asked Jesus what was necessary to receive Eternal life, Jesus accepted the same “two commandment answer”.

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying,

“Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” So he answered and said, “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’ “ And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.” But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:25-29).

Jesus answers this lawyer’s question with one of the most cherished stories of the Bible, the “Good Samaritan”. If you do not know it, read it (Luke 10:30-37). The lawyer was trying to take these great commandments and limit their application to a small group of people. Jesus taught him to do the opposite. If we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, it means loving people who are from different countries with different religions—the Samaritans were both. So many religious people limit most of their “doing good” to people who believe like them, or to their own country. But there are also many believers who have taken this most important teaching to heart—and throughout our country and the world one can find Christian missions to people’s physical and spiritual needs. We should not end our discussion of important things without finishing Luke 10. Beside serving our brethren, it is essential that we continue learning God’s ways:

*As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed them into her home. Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord’s feet, listening to what he taught. But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, “Lord, doesn’t it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me.” But the Lord said to her, “My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! **There is only one thing worth being concerned about.** Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:38-42, NLT).*

Arguments Christians Do Not Need

Nearly all church organizations produce a “Doctrinal Statement”—a list of beliefs supported by the leaders and/or scholars of that organization. Most of these statements contain some points that are clear and obvious: God is the Creator, the Bible is His Word to Mankind, salvation is only through His Son, etc. But others go on to list doctrines which have titles made of words not found in scripture at all!

Yes, they will certainly have verses to support their conclusions. But how could a particular doctrine be a major teaching of God, Christ or the apostles if the Scriptures do not contain a word for it? Here are some of those doctrinal words not found in the Bible.

- advent
- church governance
- eternal security
- great commission
- purgatory
- sacraments
- sacred calendar
- the rapture
- transubstantiation
- trinity
- third angel’s message
- third resurrection
- third tithe

This is not to say that anyone teaching or believing these doctrines is not a Christian. We all have errors. But it does show us that it is easy to divide over doctrinal debates about words and teachings the Scriptures do not say are important. Unfortunately, it is these minor differences that caused the formation of many distinct church organizations and keep people separated unto this day.

When God is speaking to us, whether in the literal person of Jesus Christ, through His written Word or through other believers, we need to listen! This does not mean that we must know everything or that every believer will know the same things. We are **growing** in grace and knowledge. We need to live Godly lives not from some formula, but because we know God and Christ;

“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3).

More Commandments for Eternal Life

Matthew, Mark and Luke all record

Jesus Christ’s answer to “What must I do to have eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16-19; Mark 10:17-19; Luke 18:18-20.) The accounts vary slightly, but all are summaries, so we can put them all together to gain a more detailed picture. Here is Matthew’s account:

Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.” He said to Him, “Which ones?” Jesus said, “ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false

witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' " The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions (Matthew 19:16-22).

All three gospels mention numbers 5 through 9 of the Ten Commandments: (5) honor parents, (6) no killing, (7) no sex sins, (8) no stealing and (9) no lying. Matthew also includes "Love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18) and Mark lists "Do not defraud" (Leviticus 19:13). Why does Jesus not cite any of the first four commandments about honoring God or the last commandment about honoring ourselves? (Coveting another's things does not hurt the other person; it hurts the one who covets. Longing for things that one cannot have simply makes one feel depressed and limits usefulness.) These five commandments, the Golden Rule and the verse about not defrauding one's neighbor are all about demonstrating the love of God to one's fellow man. We cannot see into other's hearts and know how much they love God, use God's name vainly, honor idols, truly rest on the Sabbath or covet things. But Jesus mentions commands that give demonstrable evidence of one's relationship with neighbors, which is a true indicator of one's relationship with God:

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? (1 John 4:20).

Then Jesus goes further. He does not debate whether or not the man actually observed all of these commandments from his youth. Nor does Jesus cite the rest of the Ten Commandments or give a long list of doctrines. Instead, Jesus tells him the "one thing" he lacks (Mark 10:21). This is not an Old or New Testament command, but a physical action that will **perceptibly prove** his faith in

God. Mark has the most detail, so we continue with his gospel:

*Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "**One thing** you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "**Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!**" "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:21-27).*

Christ's apostles had a very difficult time accepting this teaching. It is no surprise if we have trouble accepting it too. If this righteous man who obeyed the commandments of God would have trouble entering the Kingdom, could anybody do it? Were not his riches a blessing for obedience to God, as promised by the Old Testament? The Bible teaches that there is nothing wrong with possessing riches; it is **trusting** those riches—setting them before God—that is a sin. When Job lost his family and riches, he did not sin (Job 1:20-21). We can further understand that family and wealth are a blessing, because when we continue Jesus' story, we see that a person who gives up family and wealth for God will receive a hundredfold back—even in this life or in the "age to come".

Then Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You." So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in

this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Mark 10:28-31).

That man did not need a better confession of faith or a better doctrinal statement. If he was filled with knowledge—could cite the entire Scripture from memory—it would not be enough. He needed to trust God to be able to give up what he had now to accept the reward that God would give him later—along with eternal life. James explained it this way:"

Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also (James 2:17-26).

Whatever it Takes for Each of Us

God frequently gives each believer some different test—something different to do. Abraham was rich (Genesis 13:2), but did not trust in it. When he had the right to take a large amount of spoil from a military victory God had given to him, he declined it (Genesis 14:18-23). But he did have to wait decades for a son from Sarah and then had to be willing to sacrifice him. Rahab needed to help Israel even though her own people would have killed her if they found

out what she was doing. The people in the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 each have different weaknesses to overcome. Hebrews 11 contains a long list of godly people and specific works they did to demonstrate their faith and be ready for the “better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35). But we cannot please God without giving Him whatever it is He expects from us:

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

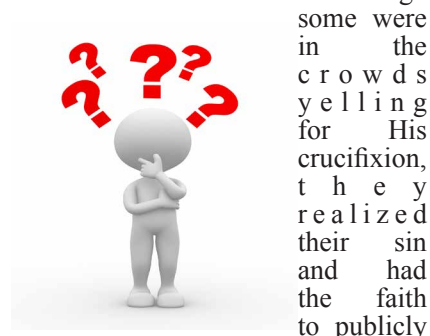
Many believers seem to take the approach that they must learn the Scripture, spend years in church, and when they finally know enough doctrine, then God might give them something to do. But the Scripture has many examples to the opposite. Often, God expects—and supplies—faith when a person first comes to him. Rahab was mentioned as a woman of faith both in James 2:25, above, and in Hebrews 11:31. How much doctrine did she know, living in the Canaanite city of Jericho? She was simply honest enough to see that Israel’s God was much more powerful than their local idols, and had the faith to know that if God could protect the Israelites, He could protect her household from certain death if the Jericho military found out what she was doing. Yes, Rahab probably went on to live a Godly life, but she passed her test of faith in a way that the rich commandment-keeper in Jesus story did not. Here are a few other examples of saving faith in the Bible from people who apparently knew little about the Scripture:

“And we [the criminals crucified with Christ] indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:41-43). And he [a Roman jailor] brought them [Paul and disciples] out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” So they said, “Believe

*on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, **having believed in God** with all his household (Acts 16:30-34).*

Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.” And Jesus said to him, “I will come and heal him.” The centurion answered and said, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:5-12).

There were God-fearing, commandment keeping Israelites who also exhibited faith. Even though



admit it—even though it would bring persecution from the religious authorities of the day:

Therefore let all the house of

Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation” (Acts 2:36-40).

God really honors faith—when we trust him with our life or the lives of our loved ones. The Roman jailor, above took a great risk to bring prisoners into his own house—and to depart from his Roman religion. Acts 16:34 says that he had believed in the true God for the first time. Similarly, the Centurion came to Jesus in spite of what his government would think about seeking healing from “inferior Jewish religion”. He further amazed Jesus by understanding that Jesus did not need to see or touch his sick servant, but that He had authority to command recovery for the servant from anywhere. What do we do if we do not have the faith to do these things? We ask for it! God gives it to us!

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Doctrine Is Not First

While God promises that His Spirit will “guide you into all truth” (John 16:13), that rarely happens all at once. Jesus told the religious leaders of His day that it was more important to have faith than to tithe on little herbs:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and

have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matthew 23:23).

When some brethren in Rome thought they should not eat any meat, Paul did not “set them straight”, but taught brethren not to offend each other when they have doctrinal differences:

Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin (Romans 14:20-23).

Paul even explained that God sometimes works through self-seeking religious teachers:

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice (Philippians 1:15-18).

There is Important Doctrine

Here is the vital and “first” message as Paul teaches.

*Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain. **For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day***

according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep (1 Corinthians 15:1-6).

Whether they have done it out of goodwill or envy and rivalry, mainstream Christianity has well expressed the literal death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. This writer first heard that message there, and we should not be afraid to give credit where credit is due. However, when it comes to the other five basic doctrines listed in Hebrews 6, mainstream Christianity has struggled greatly and needs to rely on the whole Bible rather than their long-standing doctrinal traditions.

*Therefore, leaving the discussion of the **elementary principles of Christ**, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the **foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment** (Hebrews 6:1-2).*

This article has already discussed **faith** in detail and affirmed the need for **baptism** taught by Peter in Acts 2:38. While virtually all churches teach “faith”, few of them actually exhibit and teach the powerful faith examples in the Bible. Baptism is also “all over the map”. The Bible only has examples of adult baptism by immersion in water. Many groups baptize infants and use various methods of pouring and sprinkling—missing the profound symbol of voluntary immersion death of oneself, emerging to a new life in Christ.

Laying on hands is used in the Scripture to impart the Holy Spirit after baptism (Acts 18:8), for healing (Acts 28:8), to impart spiritual gifts (1 Timothy 4:14) and to set someone aside for special service to God (Acts 13:3). Many sects of Christianity teach this to some degree, but not as thoroughly or with the importance that it should be.

The resurrection of the dead is a

doctrine found numerous places in the Bible, which we cannot cover in this article. It includes Christ’s resurrection, various individual miraculous resurrections in both the Old and New Testaments, the First Resurrection and the “Great White Throne” resurrection at the end (Revelation 20). For centuries, this important doctrine was largely eclipsed by the erroneous doctrine that people immediately go to Heaven or Hell when they die. But with the rise of independent and non-denominational ministries, the biblical resurrections of the dead are being taught more often.

Eternal judgment was taught extensively during the middle ages and into the 1800s. However, it was often associated with heaven, hell and purgatory doctrine, not with the resurrection of the dead and the Kingdom of God on earth. Today, with our society sliding into sin in many areas, eternal judgment is getting less popular as a doctrine. But that will not change what God is going to do. If Christianity would do a better job of teaching eternal judgment, with the righteousness and justice of God, believers would be able to live much more meaningful lives right now.

Unfortunately, doctrine—both true and false—has been used to create division among believers. Even in the first century, some believers were declaring themselves followers of certain godly teachers—creating factions. The apostle Paul told them to stop it! (1 Corinthians 1:10-15; 3:1-9). False teachers created even worse divisions in the Church (Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 11:18-19; Titus 3:10; Jude 1:19). But in most cases, the brethren led astray by these false teachers are still considered brethren—practicing error.

The Bible does not teach that Christian life is a process of finding the congregation with the “right” doctrine and staying there. It teaches faith and works in God, and personal learning and living by every word of God.

Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in

continued on page 20

Greetings from the Western Canadian prairies!

Many scriptures give Biblical examples of individuals who were separated, identified and appointed to a particular service of Jesus Christ and our brethren. (Acts 13:3; I Timothy 4:14; 5:22; II Timothy 1:6; Acts 6:6). Romans 16:1 identifies Phoebe as a deacon and servant of the early church in Cenchreae. (A scripture confirming how vital the service of women is to the church)

Recognizing brethren in such manner doesn't happen frequently, yet I remember watching a number of ordinations as a youngster growing up in the church, and recall the nervous, yet positive energy in the room on those particular days. Even as a kid, I knew that something unique and powerful had happened on those days. At that time, I had no earthly clue that I would be on the receiving end of a day like that, or that I would one day take part in someone else's ordination. We experienced an event in Calgary recently which brought back some of those memories, so it is with great excitement and joy that I make the following announcements:

For many years Frank and Bonnie Bean have both served as deacons in God's church. Frank and Bonnie travel upwards of three hours per week, to and from their home in rural Huxley, Alberta, to attend services with the brethren here in Calgary. Bonnie always has snacks to offer, and Frank often shares a trumpet or

vocal solo when he's not providing a sermon. Of course, I would be horribly remiss to overlook their invaluable scriptural, and spiritual insight. Their genuine love and concern for the church family has always been more than evident. What has also been evident, is that Frank has indeed been separated by God for even greater service to the body of Christ.

With that in mind, and in accordance



with the requirements for pastors and deacons set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, on the Sabbath of May 21, 2016, I was blessed and humbled to take part as Alex Kennedy Sr. (who originally ordained both Frank & Bonnie to the function of deacon) officiated the altering of Frank's ordination from deacon, to the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Calgary now has two individuals to

serve as pastor for the area, which is something unseen in the region for many years. The church beyond Calgary, and overall will undoubtedly be blessed by this addition to the active ministry.

On that same Sabbath, this writer had an opportunity that not many are afforded. My late father (Fred Connery) was a long time deacon in Calgary. His own words to myself, and many people were that over the years, he had received much credit for work my mother had performed alongside him.

Janice Kennedy (nee Connery) happens to be my mother, and the wife of Alex Kennedy Sr.

Since marrying Alex, and moving from Calgary to Penticton, Janice has continued in dedicated service to the church. The small congregation set near British Columbia's Lake Okanagan, has been witness to her obvious separation as a true servant of Jesus Christ, and His flock.

Therefore, on the same day that Frank Bean was welcomed to the ministry, he and Alex Kennedy Sr. took part as we happily laid hands on Janice, ordaining her, and recognizing her as a deacon.

Days like these are indeed a rarity and are to be treasured. Congratulations to both Frank and Janice - May God bless their continued service to His people.

Submitted by Darren Connery



From left to right: Bonnie Bean, Frank Bean, Darren Connery, Alex Kennedy Sr., Janice Kennedy

Seven Aspects of Godly Repentance

The apostle Paul, a man of high intellect, often wrote things that are profound in their comprehensiveness. Relating one extraordinary event, we are given a glimpse into the emotional responses involved in the process of repentance.

Richard Traver

The apostle Paul is acknowledged as a highly trained theologian. He was tutored by the most renowned teacher of his day; Gamaliel. Paul's writings often reflect his deep theological background with a level often lost upon untrained readers. In addition, he is reported to have had personal encounters with the Lord, once on the road to Damascus and in Arabia. In his writings, some things can often go right over our heads. He often uses very complex thoughts and very theological language, so when we read certain passages, we can miss what he is saying. At times we need to look closely to benefit fully from his inspired insights.

Corrected for Wrongdoing

In the seventh chapter of 2nd Corinthians, we read of an unexpected response to a letter of correction sent by Paul to the congregation there in Corinth. In writing the letter, Paul was apprehensive as to what reception his correction would receive. Their actual response was unexpected and perhaps a profoundly mature reaction on the part of that entire congregation!

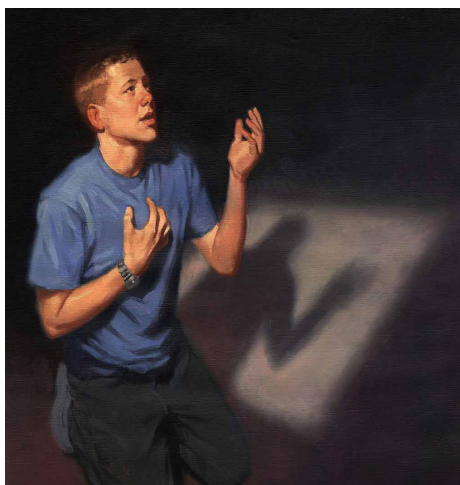
We are not told what the specific issue was, nor for our purposes does it really matter, but we can discern that there was some interpersonal offense where the congregation had taken on a less than appropriate position. Apparently, there were spiritual matters involved which warranted Paul's admonition.

The chapter relating this situation also explains that Paul was not present when they responded. What he knew of the situation was related to him by Titus. Paul's prior praise of the Corinthians was proven to have been justified as demonstrated by their genuinely repentant attitudes, and Paul speaks to that.

But there is one passage in the narrative I find to be a perceptual gold-

mine. I do not know that it has been given adequate attention. It was something that caught my attention more than thirty years ago. It has to do with the subject of true repentance.

We tend to think of repentance taking a rather straightforward approach, but as Paul reveals, it can be a little more involved than perhaps we give it credit for being. This chapter and the focal verse of it shows us that there are multiple emotional responses involved in the process of true and Godly repentance.



God Grants Repentance

We know from Romans 2:4 that repentance is not something that is entirely self-generated. Repentance is in large part, not only what we feel, but it is in large part a gift of God. It is something that He triggers within us to produce certain responses, and it's something in which He participates with us in its accomplishment.

We typically focus on this subject during the Days of Unleavened Bread. We understand the illustration of unleavened bread, where the observance pictures the process of putting sin out of our lives.

That is the objective of repentance. It is something that we have to be personally involved in. It is not something that God does for us. He brings us to a point of realization, but we have to respond appropriately, we have to do something. In effect, when the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread are over, they are not over.

Repentance is Ongoing

Those Seven Days picture an entire lifetime, and that is what we need to keep in mind. Even though we may acknowledge what those days illustrate, reflecting upon the process of repentance and getting sin out of our lives, its full meaning is not limited to just that time of year. In effect, the effort is not over. It is something that must remain ongoing throughout our entire lifetimes. Repentance is an ongoing activity!

Paul addresses what might be regarded as an unusual reaction in 2nd Corinthians, chapter 7. That is the focal chapter for this topic. Paul brings out something that, even though this particular chapter was applicable to that one congregation, it is also applicable to each of us personally.

Remembering First Reactions

It may have been a long time since we first came through our early repentance experience as we were coming into the truth, so Paul's described responses may be a long time ago for some of us. I discovered this passage and came to realize what it was saying some time ago. While some of the emotional responses Paul describes may not be that fresh in our minds, they should always be involved. If we are always repenting, if we are always carrying on the process of dealing with sin in our lives, then these emotional responses should be there, to one degree or another. And, if we understand them, we can do a better job at achieving what we seek.

In 2nd Corinthians, chapter 7, we read Paul's description of the emotional responses involved in the repentance experience. Keep in mind, Paul had written a letter of correction to this particular congregation, and they responded in what we could call an extraordinary manner because the whole congregation together responded positively to the correction that they were given.

Beginning in verse 1. "And having therefore these promises, dearly beloved ... " What promises were those? I will come back and answer that. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Can you think of a better way of describing the process of repentance? That is the subject of this chapter: Repentance.

Verse 2. "Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man." The fact that he is mentioning that, here in this particular context, suggests that someone had corrupted and defrauded others. "I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that you are in our hearts to die and live with you. Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." Keep in mind, this is in response to correction that he had sent to them earlier. "For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears." In other words, they encountered external opposition, and, on the part of the people, internal apprehensions. It is not that different today.

Verse 6. "Nevertheless God, that comforts those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus." Titus was a key player in this particular narrative. We will see why in a minute. "And not just by his coming, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more." Titus is relating to Paul what took place in that congregation. Paul was not sure originally what to expect. He sent a letter of correction and he afterward regretted sending it. But then, when he realized its effect, he was glad that he sent it, and he goes on to say that.

Verse 8. "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle has made you sorry, though it was but for a season."

A Profitable Sorrow

Verse 9. "Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that you sorrowed to repentance." Repentance is the key issue here. "For you were made sorry after a godly manner, that you might receive damage by us in nothing." In other words, there was no further correction needed. "For godly sorrow works repentance to salvation not to be repented of."

There is a kind of repentance that is valuable, as opposed to those kinds that are not, for example: "The sorrow of the world works death." There are two different kinds of sorrow. There are two different kinds of responses to a need to repent, whether generated of God or whether it is self-generated. There are people that may want to repent,

yet they are clueless as to how to do it. It matters if that repentance is God-induced or not. Do we understand the difference?

Verse 11 is the key verse in this chapter. "For behold this selfsame thing, that you sorrowed after a godly sort." In that sorrow or in that response, they went through several successive emotional stages. You have to ask when we read this, "How did he know that?" Titus must have had some very detailed conversations with these people. Would not we like to know what they said to one another for him to know this much?

Seven Emotional Responses

Notice what he says here. "For behold this self-same thing, that you sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!" Seven things he mentions. "In all things you have approved yourselves to be clear on this matter."

Which of those seven things involve any physical deeds? None of them! These are all emotional responses. These all play out in our minds. There is a progression there. If we think back to the time when we first began to repent, when we first came to know the truth, when we came to know the Commandments of God and their application in our lives, when we began to understand what the full dimension of sin is and made a commitment to repent, if you think about it carefully (and I know it might be a long time ago – it was with me) but if you think carefully you should recall that you experienced many if not all of these emotional responses. I will go through them one by one shortly, but first I want to continue reading a little further.

Verse 12. "Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did not for his cause that had done the wrong," He was not writing in favor of the person who committed the wrong, "nor for his cause that suffered wrong," he was not favoring either party, it was not the point, "but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you."

Apparently, the congregation became involved in some matter between members that was not appropriate, and the congregation may have made some improper accommodations for one party or the other. Paul recognized the need for them to repent as a congregation, which is in itself unusual. But they did see their fault and they repented. Their repentance was remarkable.

Paul, whether he was intending to do it or not, in writing to them afterward, laid out for our benefit each of the steps or each of the aspects of repentance as they affect us emotionally.

When we repent, whether presently or in the future, keep these things in mind, because they teach us something about the complete picture. When we repent, do these factor into our responses emotionally? If our repentance is genuine, if our repentance is of God, would not these represent our responses? I find it remarkable what the Apostle Paul gave us here.

continued on page 22

Ask Norm!



asknorm@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

June 11, 2016

Dear Van,

Norman,

Have you ever spoken up there (or anywhere else) about mental illness, depression, suicide, etc.?

As you may know, there have been a couple suicides recently involving the ministry in COGWA and Living [names withheld].

It has been said that the COGs are generally ignoring the problem, encouraging people to think they shouldn't be depressed, that the Holy Spirit should be enough.

In fact, I asked an elder I know about United's recent General Council of Elders. While there was education on marriage and various addictions, nothing helping pastors deal with mental illness, which is becoming a huge national problem.

I think there may still be some hangover from the old Worldwide days, when people didn't go to doctors at all. Reluctance to seek help for clinical depression may be a lingering vestige.

Folks may feel stigmatized because of depression, or that it would be "cheating" if they sought outside counsel and possibly medication.

Van C Baker, Illinois

You bring up a huge subject, but it is one wherein I have a great deal of interest. Of the 450 homeless people who have been Guests on our campus in our homeless ministry, about 80 have been clients of the county Community Mental Health agency. All counties have a CMH for the poor people with mental health issues, but the name in each county is different. During our six years of operation, about a dozen Guests have either attempted or threatened to commit suicide.

Does medication help? From our observation, sometimes! We have witnessed all possibilities:

- Take medication as prescribed and get better.
- Take medication as prescribed and get worse.
- Not take medication and get better.
- Not take medication and get worse.
- Take medication the way the client thinks best and get better.
- Take medication the way the client thinks best and get worse.

Sometimes the changes were small, but other times the "better" and "worse" was massive. "Better" could mean the Guest was able to hold a job, maintain housing or get along

with family and friends in a way they had not done for years. "Worse" could mean attempted or threatened suicide, criminal assault and battery, or in one case, attempted murder. These things have happened after a person had their medicine changed by doctors or after they decided to make changes on their own.

I think mental illness is very similar to physical illness. Some people improve with treatments and some do not. Some get no treatment and improve, but others get worse.

I spent about 50 hours one time looking up all the verses about sickness and healing in the Bible. My paper from the study is available here: www.cbtm.info/cbtm/health/healin02.pdf. When it comes to illness, the Bible has much more to say about one's sins, our attitudes and God's working in our lives than it does about diet, exercise, diagnosis, treatments, etc. We cannot judge others when they are sick, because we do not always know if illness is due to the person's own sins, other's sins or God's special working. This scripture is a classic example:

Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him" (John 9:1-3).

But we could find many other scriptures that show us that illness is linked to sin and healing to repentance. Even the one of the most quoted healing scriptures says this, but people often do not apply them as they read them:

Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases (Psalm 103:2-3).

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (James 5:14-16).

In my own life, I have suffered a time or two for what I believe would have been diagnosed as a mental illness had I gone to the appropriate medical professional. But I was delivered when I confessed it to other believers and they prayed for me. I have known of others who have received similar healing.

On the opposite side, I have prayed for others whose illness seemed to be linked to an apparent sin—but who expressed little interest or even refused to talk about sins and how they might be related. In most cases, they were not healed—though I have also seen God heal in His mercy when someone's life was still a wreck. It does not bother me that I do not understand why God heals sometimes and does not at other times—because I am convinced that He knows what He is doing.

I think whether a person uses the services of medical professionals or not is only a minor point in how God works regarding sickness and healing. Sometimes, when we have learned God's lesson, he heals directly with no apparent treatment involved. Other times a treatment is prescribed, such as a dip in the Jordan River (2 Kings 5:14), a lump of figs on a boil (Isaiah 38:21) or

some spit in the eye and a wash in a pool (John 9:6-7). I have seen people confess their sins to God and others, and then receive healing through their doctor's treatment, through a home "natural" treatment or by doing absolutely nothing. On the contrary, people have pursued the above three routes and not received healing.

A couple of months ago, I was busy packing for a trip. I thought I did not have time to pray or deal peacefully with other people. I was repairing my cell phone holster so that I would not lose my phone on the trip—it had come off my belt many times previously. While pressing hard to drill a hole in it, the drill bit broke and I instantly drilled a hole all the way through my left index finger. I called the emergency room and was going to go there to have them clean it out and stitch it up. But I first stopped to realize that I was again learning a lesson from God about time: We think we do not have time for God and his righteousness, so he sends us an accident or illness and we suddenly find time to take care of ourselves. We had the time for Him all along—we were just using it for less important things. I band-aided a piece of garlic over the injury, did only what was important, and had a wonderful trip. It thoroughly recovered.

In the last 40 years, I have been to the emergency room 4 or 5 times, but have not been to a "doctor". I believe that is how God has worked with me. But other believers go to doctors frequently. The main thing is that we must always ask, "How is God working with me in this difficulty?" "What does he expect me to do?" Sometimes he shows us immediately. Sometimes we need to pray and fast to find out.

Sometimes, I believe God wants us to put our name on a prayer list, because it is a way of confessing to our fellow believers that we need God's deliverance from sickness and sin. It also shows the power of Christian prayer. Other times, people seem to think that if they are on the most and largest prayer lists possible, they will be healed. I do not think healing is a marketing contest.

Because a Christian has the Holy Spirit, he is not automatically

delivered from physical or mental illnesses. Because a Christian is a minister or other leader, he is not exempt from trials or the working of God in his life. We can see how God worked with the leaders in the Bible. They have the same issues with families, friends, finances and temptations.

Being a minister in a corporate church can have major conflicts of conscience. I quit working for a big church when I, among other things, saw that the leaders accepted a doctrinal difference from a member who was their biggest contributor, but disfellowshipped other minimally-contributing members with the same doctrinal difference. Ministers are required to accept, reject or discipline members based upon their church organization's economic and political considerations, rather than trust God to do the right thing.

It is interesting that the minister in your letter was the one required by his headquarters to "disfellowship" me from his church organization over 20 years ago. The reason was that other people had read my writings and then left their church organization—which was probably true. During the final meeting we had, the minister paid for my dinner, invited me to come back for Feast Days or special events, and gave me several names and addresses of other independent believers whom he thought would want to read my writings. It was very clear that he was able to see the purpose of God outside of his own church organization. We departed friends and that situation was not a burden to either one of us. I have not spoken with him for many years and have no idea what struggles may have contributed to his recent suicide.

We should not be amazed. Moses, Elijah, Job and Jonah all pleaded with God to take their lives (Numbers 11:15; 1 Kings 19:2-4; Job 6:8-10; 7:15; Jonah 4:3, 8). Even Jesus Christ begged God to take his trial away from Him if it were possible (Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42). We can have utmost confidence in the righteous judgment of God. We need not worry that a minor mistake or a moment of weakness will eliminate one's eternal destiny.

Unfortunately, some church groups

are very judgmental. If someone, especially a minister, admits to having physical or, even worse, a mental illness—they will tend to look down on them and cast them out of their social circles. Whereas, we should openly hear the struggles of others, pray for them in love, uphold their efforts toward repentance and righteousness, and seek their complete restoration and healing. We all have a lot to do. Be patient with someone today. Be a blessing to someone today.

January 10, 2016

Greeting Dear Sir:

I have just finished reading the Winter 2016 edition of your most excellent magazine and just felt I had to write.



The article on *The Spirit of Trust vs. the Knowledge of Evil* is one of the best and relevant articles that I have read in a long time. A lot of Christian publications tend to always talk about the negative issues besetting our world to the detriment of learning about the Word of God and the positive issues such as the things taught by Christ. We all need to try and develop the Fruits of the Spirit and to develop our understanding of love and its components as taught by the Apostle Paul (see Gal 5:22-23; 1Cor 13:3-8; 1Tim 6:11) and also by Jesus (Matt 7:16-20).

I do not believe in the Devil or Satan myself, excepting as personification of sin, however, I can concur with the overall contents of the fine article. Before I leave off, do you have publications available on the Ten Commandments and their relevance today, both in a global sense and/or how they should be lived by the individual?

God bless you
H. Deville, Australia

We are glad that main point of the article encouraged you. There is a tendency of church groups to concentrate on the evils in the world, thereby allowing them to feel better about themselves. Sure, Jesus expounds the evils of the religious leaders of his day in Matthew 23 and foretells the destruction of the nation in Matthew 24. But is Jesus happy that those “nasty people are finally going to get what they have coming?” His attitude is right in the middle of the chapters.

“ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ “ (Matthew 23:37-39).

Jesus wanted to care for them, but they did not want it. We should notice that he does not say they must repent of all of the sins that He had mentioned in chapter 23 in order to see Him. Rather, he tells them that they need to praise Christ, the One whom the Father sent. And then, He will teach them His ways.

I realize that some Bible-readers do not believe in a literal devil, as the Hebrew *satan* means “adversary” and the Greek *diabolos*, translated “devil”, means “false accuser”. There are certainly many verses with these words that could be applied to anyone who is an adversary or false accuser. I also realize that until God clears the matter up, there will always be debate over which verses of the Bible are to be taken literally, symbolic or both. But there are several verses that are very difficult for me to accept as applying to anything other than a literal being. For example, what other kind of adversary was there in the Garden of Eden, except for a fallen angel to tempt Adam and Eve? (Genesis 3). Satan in Job 1:6-12 shows up with other “*sons of God*”, has conversations and takes action. Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 show that the “*serpent*”, the Devil and Satan are

all the same being. Other scriptures that seem very literal too me: Matthew 4:1-3; Luke 4:1-13; Jude 1:9, Rev 12:12.

Shepherd's Voice Magazine does not currently have any articles directly on the Ten Commandments, however in the next issue of *SVM* we anticipate an article by Milton Castro in Calgary Alberta (see also an update on the Calgary congregation this issue), but my Church Bible Teaching Ministry website does:

What the Ten Commandments Can Do for You (www.cbtlm.info/cbtlm/popular/10comm01.pdf) and

Do all Religions Teach the Ten Commandments? (www.cbtlm.info/cbtlm/popular/allten01.pdf)

Brother Norman:

Just a note to say I liked your article about God caring for unbelievers, in the Winter 2016 *Shepherd's Voice* and I always enjoy the Ask Norm column. To be honest, those are the only things I and Mel like. We all should know already that the Father and Jesus love us. (They loved us before we repented, not just because we repented.) The possibility of healing is and has been available to any who will come to God, ask and then obey what they are told—whether they truly “know him” or not. The Bible clearly tells us this. It's a possibility, but not a guarantee. Why not ask?

Anyway, I hope you have or have had a meaningful Pentecost. I love the counting from Wavesheaf day to Pentecost! So symbolic! The Passover, Wavesheaf, Unleavened Bread and Pentecost are all about the Body of Christ... Us!

Grace and Peace,
JC

Thank you for your kind words. Asking God to deliver us from our sins and sicknesses are two things that should be part of the regular Christian life. Receiving either one is a good deal, but often both come together. It is too easy to be comfortable where we are—with both our sicknesses and our sins.

Thanks for mentioning the count to Pentecost. I have done that some years, and not others. I should do it more! Many Christians ask God for His plan for their lives—the lesson from counting from the resurrection of Christ, the Wavesheaf, to Pentecost teaches us that there is a period of time from the time we become believers till the time when we are filled and fruitful. Updating the count takes only a tiny part of the day, but it is a valuable lesson to remember that each day is part of our Christian growth.

May 23, 2016

Dear Brothers in the Lord:

I have just read the Winter '16 issue of *Shepherd's Voice Magazine* as a pass-around copy and I was quite impressed. I've been incarcerated for 6 years and have been studying with the COG during that time—or trying to. I was having some problems trying to discern what was being taught as doctrine as some of the groups can't seem to agree on what to teach or to whom to teach. Not being sure if I am in the "in" crowd or an unbeliever or just what it is I am supposed to believe in.

I came across Bro. Rich Traver in Clifton, Colo. (GoldenSheaves.org). (I gave you the Internet site although I am unable to reach it as we, of course, do not have computers or anything else for that matter). I found Rich's writings to be a breath of fresh air and he helped me to renew my faith. Through his congregation organization at Christian COG, Grand Junction, Co., I have finally gotten, I think, on the right track.

Then I read the *Shepherd's Voice Magazine* and I was pleasantly surprised as I see you all were on the same page. Now I do not feel all alone trying to find my way through the wilderness. I can only thank you and Rich for putting my head in order and helping me recover my faith. Your magazine was such a help in connecting my beliefs. Thank you so much.

As we cannot connect through the 'net', I would like to request copies

of SVM from 2015 if it is possible. Is such a refreshing help—like cold water on a desert day. I'm not sure when I'll be getting out—hopefully 7/17 and will be going to the Dallas/Arlington area. If you are aware of a COG in that area that has the same beliefs I would appreciate knowing of them. (Please excuse the spelling—I was a journalism minor, but that was 55 years ago.) Brain fog!

Oh, I almost forgot: As Rich took on the "Sacred Calendar, Exclusive Church, All Other COG Will Die" groups, I called him the "Sacred Cow Tipper". He liked that. That goes for you all too!

Christian Love,
James Roark 1618542
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It is the job of Christians everywhere to turn other people to God, His Son, and His Word. Church organizations and individual teachers come and go. I am glad that you are learning from multiple teachers and staying away from exclusive groups. If you do not understand a doctrine, ask God to show you—Christ is alive and managing His Church!

I spent about 20 years attending one big church organization and when it began to break up, it was a great trial on my family and me. Now, when I am somehow connected with a church group beginning to break up, I first try to clear up misunderstandings or apply Scriptural principles to help the brethren remain united if possible. But if that is not wanted or it does not work, there are not any worries. I realize that it will be an opportunity for the brethren to learn patience and good judgment, and then move on to new opportunities, friends and spiritual growth.

While there are many negative aspects of prison life, take advantage of your ability to read lots of literature and study the Bible as much as you want! I have so many books and articles here that I want to read—and so many things I would like to write. I know that I will not even get close to finishing them before I die. Use your opportunity well!

April 15, 2016

Dear Norm:

What are your thoughts regarding Seventh Day Adventism and the following article on Lunar Sabbath?

— D. Slater, Arizona

I hope to say something that is both truthful and encouraging to everyone who might read this, whether a Seventh Day Adventist, a Lunar Sabbath observer, or someone who does not do these things, but wants to know about them.

I have Seventh Day Adventist friends, I have attended their services, read their doctrines and read about them as a body. They have done a lot of good works in building private high schools, first-class universities and numerous hospitals all over the world. They have about 80,000 churches and 20,000,000 members worldwide. I believe I see the fruit of the Holy Spirit among them. One congregation was quite willing to let me, not a Seventh Day Adventist, participate in their foot washing, bread and wine service. Some of them see themselves, though, as the only "true church". Unfortunately, their headquarters file lawsuits against any split-off group which includes the words "Seventh Day Adventist" in their title—I have another friend who started the "Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church" and was the victim of such a suit. The group heavily uses the extensive teachings of Ellen G. White. She was certainly a good writer, knew the Bible well. Yet, I do not agree with all of her doctrine. I also believe time has and will prove some of her prophetic interpretation false.

Please realize, though, that I have the same opinion of many Bible teachers in Church of God groups and other denominations. The apostle Paul clearly taught us not to form denominations (1 Corinthians 1:10-15; 3:1-9). I can remember, when I was younger, that I wanted to join the church group that had all of its doctrines right. Unfortunately, many church organizations encourage that thinking, claiming that all of their doctrines are right. But the truth is,

ASK NORM!
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we need to be individually right with God, reading from his word, seeking his will through prayer, and living a life of faith. He will show us what we should study and believe. When we try to accept all of the teaching from a certain teacher or church organization, we receive what God has inspired, as well as what somebody wrote someday because their organization needed a teaching on that particular subject—but it may not have been inspired by God.

The Lunar Sabbath teaching basically states that the seven-day cycle starts over with every new moon. Because it takes the moon about 29.5 days to go around the earth, lunar months vary between 29 and 30 days. This means that there will be four weeks in the month, and then one or two extra days at the end—often called “New moon days.” Lunar Sabbath observers keep a “Sabbath” that falls on a different weekday of our

modern Calendar every month. For example, if they are observing their Sabbath on Monday this month, it will be on Wednesday or Thursday next month. Because the new moon is at times sighted differently from different parts of the world—or even different parts of a large country like the U.S.A.—not all Lunar Sabbath keepers will start their week at the same time throughout the world. In other words, the International Date Line, for them, moves from place to place every month.

While there are many Bible verses that can be shown to be compatible with the Lunar Sabbath, there are none that specifically say to start numbering the days of the week from the beginning of the month. Furthermore, the simple command to work six days and rest one is not obeyed with the Lunar Sabbath (Exodus 20:9-10 and Deuteronomy 5:13-14). There are other Scriptures, such as the counting of Pentecost, which I do not think can work with the Lunar Sabbath thinking.

The Lunar Sabbath proponents will find a Lunar week observed here and there in history, but nearly every nation today has a seven-day-week tradition, and over half the languages of the world use a word like “Sabbath” or one that means “rest” or “festival” for the last day of the week. Furthermore, not all Lunar Sabbatarians agree on how to determine the beginning of a new month—especially when the weather is cloudy at that time. In order for everybody to be on the same day of the week, they would need either a recognized religious body to declare the beginning of months, or they would need a complex set of rules to follow—rules that are not precisely declared in the Scripture.

Ultimately, we must ask, what is Christianity about? Is it about deciphering a complex set of historical and biblical secrets that less than 0.01% of professing Christians have understood? For an answer to that question, see the article in this issue: *What Is Most Important to God?* 

What Is Most Important to God
continued from page 12

It teaches faith and works in God, and personal learning and living by every word of God.

Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you (James 1:27).

The Greatest Is Love

After all of this teaching by Christ and His apostles about commandments, faith, eternal life and doctrine, a reading of 1 Corinthians 13 is still in order. This is the famous “love chapter”, which also tells us what is “greatest.”


And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

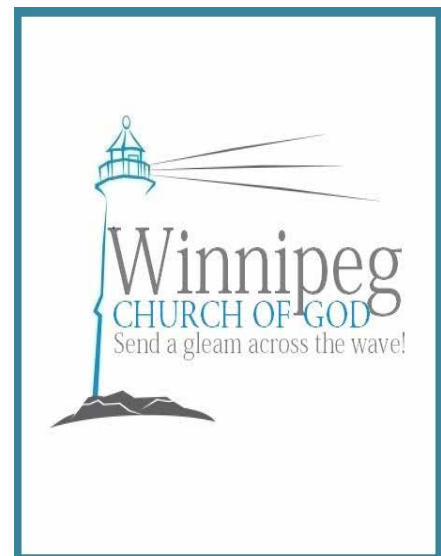
And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection (Colossians 3:14).

“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

Even with all that has been said here about what is important, God still says that others will recognize His people by their love for others. If we love God with all our hearts, we will want to be like Him.

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love (1 John 4:8). 



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False Brethren Among God's People continued from page 7

moral failure in most cases. A moral failure is most often what precedes apostasy, where the faith is turned into license to exert one's own will.

All this may sound like an argument for a top down hierarchal structure, which again is not the Church model. There is the reality that the Head of the Church assigns people for service, and if we reject those who are sent to us, we may be rejecting Him who sent them. The Head of the Church is not appointing elders by their acceptability to all, for they will find themselves unpopular on occasions.

I have recently intervened in the rebellion of an individual and his disciple who had an agenda to discredit a long serving elder and by unscrupulous means take an opportunity to control a congregation.

What we see again was as much misguided and maligned as any of the groups and individuals in the examples of Jude. This was rebellion against God, not the elder. Their methods were subversive and manipulative, but well justified in their own hearts. Yet, God saw to it that their agenda was thwarted.

How to Contend Earnestly for the Faith

I have seen where those who felt they were defending the faith once delivered, actually became the kind of culprit Jude warned us about. Though they were zealous in their quest, they were actually causing division and the hurt. This should

have become quickly evident to them or at least triggered their self-awareness if the Holy Spirit was leading these individuals. But this was absent.

Will we be manipulated over time to turn against God, thinking our contending for the faith is against a man, believing our position is just and Biblical? Any one of us might, as we are not necessarily immune just because we are aware of the possibilities, and because we have studied and preached from Jude many times.

Fortunately, Jude tells us how to contend for the faith, and if we set our hearts on his message our defenses against going astray and turning against the faith will be strong and well rooted:

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh (Jude 20-23).

Jude tells us to commit, keep and conduct ourselves to the faith if we are going to succeed in our calling. We are to commit ourselves to Christian growth (20, 21) and conduct ourselves with Christian grace (22-23). Imbedded in these few verses is a call to keep ourselves in the love of God, and this we will do if we:

- Commit ourselves to building, praying and waiting.

- Conduct ourselves with mercy, salvation and purity.

These commitments are spiritual and we on our own do not have the strength to carry them out. Faith, hope and love are spiritual virtues that we can only cultivate through the leading of God's great gift to us; His Holy Spirit.

There is so much that one could say about these virtues, but we need not have to say much more to those who have and are led by the Holy Spirit and are studying His Word.

Jesus Christ sums up his teachings that can only speak to those who are transforming by the Holy Spirit as follows:

"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock."
(Matthew 7:25)

When Jesus spoke of those who built their houses on a rock he is not just talking about tough times, losses and all things that are common to man. He is talking about trials of faith, and the subject of this article touches on exactly that. If we do not learn from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, earnestly contending for the faith is an unlikely avenue for us.

Let us contend earnestly for the faith that God has so graciously given us. It is a precious gift worthy of all our sacrifice. 🙏

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Seven Aspects of Godly Repentance continued from page 15

Verse 13. "Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceeding the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all." The outcome of Paul's original correction was perhaps something he did not anticipate, especially to this complete degree. The whole congregation saw what they were doing wrong and repented of it – actively repented of it – and it affected them to their core.

It was not just a surface act, it was something that they were deeply into, a Godly sorrow, and Godly sorrow produces the repentance process, if we can call it that. These seven steps, are the seven aspects of Godly sorrow unto repentance.

Verse 14. "For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth."

Paul's positive comments toward these people were proven to be correct. There might have been some doubt about that originally. "And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, while he remembered the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him. I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things." The Corinthian congregation at this stage exhibited an extraordinary maturity! How many congregations would respond like that today? How many congregations would respond to a letter of correction and not become divided over the issue? It can happen.

Promises of Life and the Holy Spirit

Paul begins the chapter by referring to these promises, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh ..." and so on. What were the promises? We find those in the chapters previous. We could go back to 1st Corinthians 6, verses 14 to 20. These things are already in mind when he writes chapter 7. 1st Corinthians, 6:14. "And God has both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. Know you

not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" If we are going to be sanctified as members of Christ, should we not be thoroughly repentant?

Dropping down to verse 19. "What? know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own?" When we are sanctified to be a part of the body of Christ, our options become different. Effectively, we do not own ourselves anymore. Verse 20. "For you are bought with a price, and as a result of that glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." This is part of the previous promise that Paul refers to. 2nd Corinthians 6:1. "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he says, I have heard you in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation I succored you: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)" Verse 3. "Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed." The ministry, of course, is partly responsible for the spiritual health of the congregation.

Verse 15. "And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part has he that believes with an infidel? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." When God walks in us, would He act differently than he would in Himself? God walking in us is a correlation to partaking of unleavened bread. We can see the connection; we can see the picture here.

Verse 17. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." I would consider that as the promises that Paul makes reference to in chapter 7, verse 1. Our calling has a lot more to do than just how we live our lives. It is an inclusion in the very Family of God, and He is in us. The unleavenedness that He is should be within us.

Another Version

I want to read this same passage, the key passage at least, from another version, because I think it words it perhaps a little better. This is 2nd Corinthians 7 again. The key verse was verse 11, but starting in verse 10: The NIV translates it this way: "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this Godly sorrow has produced in you, what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourself to be innocent, that is, to have been absolved of guilt in the matter."

First Response

So what do these terms mean? We have seven. The first is carefulness. The Greek word is *spoudē*, Strong's #4710. I think the various definitions it gives could be paraphrased in the modern age, "Taking careful and purposeful attention to a specific matter." We are not to be casual about it. We are careful to focus on what is important. This is a matter of importance. Our response to it should be appropriate carefulness. Was not that our first instinct when we were first being called into the truth? We became so careful about things that we never would have been careful of before. We would not have given certain things a thought. Who cared? But when we begin the process of repentance, we have to take care of what is important, we have to direct our minds to attend to these matters, whatever they might be, giving careful and purposeful attention to specific thoughts and actions.

Carrying On With the Process

The next response he refers to is self-clearing. I do not know that that is the best possible English translation. The Greek is *apologia*, # 627, to answer for oneself. Not just answering to someone else for oneself, but we have to answer to ourselves as well. We might give an excuse for something we did to someone else and that other person may say, "Oh, yeah, I guess you were justified ..." We can not do that to ourselves. When we make excuses to ourselves, there is

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Sheep and the Goats

Alex Kennedy

“When the son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left” (Matthew 25:31-33).

Why does Jesus make a distinction between these two animals as a representation of those who shall inherit the kingdom and those of whom he said *“Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matthew 25:41)?

Does he have something against goats, a creature that he himself created? I would imagine not. In Genesis 1:24-25 says: And God said, *“Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.”* And it was so. God made the wild animals, each according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

God pronounced everything he made as ‘good’. So what is the issue with goats? Well, I have a theory. The connection that I make is based on an early childhood memory and one as a young adult. My brother and


I would often go to my grandparents farm to stay for a weekend. We loved to get up early and help my Grandpa do his chores. He would start by watering all his trees and his garden. Then he would move on to the animals. He would first feed his chickens, pheasants, and rabbits and then we would follow him to the field where we could see the flock of sheep grazing in the distance and in his Portuguese accent he would call out: *“Come! Come!”*



At once they would flock to him and wait patiently as he filled their water and food trough and then they would eat. Quite respectful little sheep would you not say? Of course they would only listen to him. They knew their master’s voice (John 10:27), and I as a boy was impressed, but it was not until later when I read that scripture did I realize in retrospect how simple a connection that was. It was something I could relate to and subsequently understand because I had seen this happen before my eyes.

Now on to the goats. I was 21 when I met my wife, and it was also when I met my first goat on her parent’s farm. I was astonished at the

differences between that goat and my grandfather’s sheep. For one, she would be the first to be fed, but as soon as the other animals were fed I would watch as she left her food and began eating the pig’s food, then the chicken’s, and then the rabbit’s only to return to her own food and eat that as well! To top that off she would approach my mother-in-law while she had the food still in her hand and she would jump up and try to snatch it from her hand before she was barely through the door. My mother-in-law later got a male goat and he would try to do the same only far more aggressively. (I still to this day do not understand why she got another goat) and I cannot forget how they would chew through the fence to get to something they wanted to get. What I am getting at is it was quite plain to see a vast difference between sheep and goats. The goats do not know their masters voice and neither do they care. The sheep know and do care.

We as Christians know full well what we ought to be like as we see the contrasts between these two creatures that God has made with what Jesus says in Matthew 25. However I am thankful for these two memories because it allows me to relate to that scripture on a more personal level. I believe the lesson sinks that much deeper when we relate as such and I hope by sharing this story it will have the same effect on the reader. Therefore, when our Lord returns, I hope to see you all with me on the right. 

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no fooling around. We cannot really convince ourselves that we are innocent when we know otherwise. So the next stage is this clearing process. It could be phrased in a more modern way: "Addressing cause and effect with the intent to remedy both." This is not with respect to other people. This is with respect to clearing oneself.

All Are Personal Responses

And, we should note, all of these are self-focused. They are not blaming or they are not involving anyone else. These are all personal, as it was in the case of the Corinthian church. They did not fault either the person who committed the offense or the person who was offended. Paul did not write in support of either one, either. He said so. That was not his point.

A Self-Loathing

The third item is indignation. Now we are getting a little deeper into the responses. The Greek is *aganaktésis*, #24, translated primarily as indignation: being moved with anger towards ones' self, in this case. Indignant. "Did I do that? Was I really that way?" Indignation here is expressed toward the self.

Fear of Doing Wrong

The fourth item is fear. A simple word. I think we know what fear is. The Greek is *phobos*, #5401. To be put in fear, alarm, or fright. To be afraid; exceedingly terrorized. In other words, the fear is our response to what we know to be a punishable offense. Being apprehensive of committing wrong actions. That fear affects what we think and do. It is not just being afraid of something that we cannot do anything about. It is the kind of fear that prompts a response. Do you remember when you first discovered the truth? There were many things that we did routinely without giving it a thought before, then all of a sudden we have become concerned, asking ourselves, "Is it right to continue doing that?"

I recall one incident in Concord, New Hampshire in 1971. It was my first stay-over at someone else's house. It was before one of the Holy Days: Pentecost. There were a few of us

bachelors sharing another bachelor's apartment. On Sabbath morning, we got up to have breakfast. We were frying eggs, and being brand new, we began to question, "Should we be frying eggs for ourselves on the Sabbath day? Does that break any commandment?" We resolved it in time in our minds, but it is that initial fear that maybe it was not right, that we needed to answer. It is that kind of fear, apprehensive of committing a wrong action, whether it is wrong or not. We can many times determine that something is wrong that really is not, and we can sometimes gloss over something that is wrong. But a person coming to repentance – or for that matter at any point in our spiritual lives – when we are repentant, there should be an element of fear against doing something that is not right.

A Burning Desire

Number five. Vehement desire. The Greek is *epithésis*, #1972. An earnestness, a vehement desire. It is well translated. We could call it a genuine and heartfelt commitment to achieve a right end, a vehement desire: The desire to do what is right that is more than a normal response of an unconverted person. When we want to do God's will, there is a burning desire. I remember a story told by one of the McNair brothers, I forget which one, that when he was coming into the truth as a young man, he learned this thing, he learned that thing, and as time went on, he would be learning more and more things. He said every time he learned something new, he says, "I just wanted to do that." A reaction he would never have had before. His first reaction to a correction or a point of teaching: he wanted to do it. That I think expresses that vehement desire. Whatever God says, we want to do it. A genuine and heartfelt commitment to achieve a right end.

Response Number Six,

I think we understand this one. It should not be hard to figure out. Zeal. We know what zeal is. It is even something beyond vehement desire. The Greek is *zelos*, #2205. Zeal conveying the sense of a kind of jealousy is what the Concordance gives us. Being jealous against something that takes away from what we should be. We could call zeal simply personal motivation: someone who is

strongly motivated. There is a scripture that talks about being zealous of good works, which of course is the implication here.

Deepest Satisfaction

This last one might not be so obvious. Number seven. Here again I do not know that the English gives us the proper sense, but it is the word revenge. When we are fully repentant, there is this emotional response that is a form of revenge.

When we think of revenge, we tend to think of it as being against someone else. That is not the sense here, though. The Greek here is *ekdiké-sis*, Strong's #1557: Vindication or retribution, applying some kind of punishment. When we get revenge, (keep in mind this is personal), the revenge is that we are satisfied that the detrimental effects of sin are conquered and holiness is vindicated. The revenge is in knowing that we have conquered that element in our lives that is detrimental to our spiritual health. We have gotten revenge against the forces that want to destroy us.

That is the kind of revenge, being confident that the detrimental effects of sin are conquered and holiness is vindicated.

When we think of these seven steps – and perhaps this would be a good message for the spring high day season, but even at any time this is certainly appropriate – Godly repentance takes us through stages of emotional responses that involve some of, or perhaps even all of these, depending on the particular issue. The Apostle Paul understood that, and it is extraordinary to me that he explains these responses all together in one place.

Thankfully, the Corinthian church acted as they did giving him the platform to speak of this matter as he did. It tells us so much about the process that we go through when we genuinely are repenting.

A Basis for Faith

Think about this. What impact would this process of repentance have on a person's faith? What degree of confidence does it allow us in our walk with God?

When we have achieved full Godly repentance, our faith is strengthened, our walk with God is more confident than it could ever be. In Isaiah 66:2, God says, "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word." That is the fear component. We are to take God's word seriously. In Psalms 34:18, we read something similar. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as be of contrite spirit."

In all of these seven responses that we have just gone through, which of them expresses arrogance? Which of them express any degree of rebelliousness? Which passes blame onto someone else? Which of them express any kind of disobedience? None of them do. It is not there. That is the contrite heart that God is talking about.

As we continue in this lifetime of continuing to put sin out of our lives, let us appreciate these seven aspects of repentance that affect our calling, our hope and our specialness with God.

Richard Traver is the site author of www.goldensheaves.org, and lives in Clifton, Colorado.

Don't Become a Rusty Nail



A congregation built a new church building and people came from far and wide to admire its beauty. Up on the roof, a little nail heard the people praising everything about the lovely structure-except the nail. No one even knew he was there, and he became angry and jealous. "If I am that insignificant, nobody will see me if I quit!" So the nail then released its hold, slid down the roof, and fell into the mud. That night it rained. Soon the shingle that had no nail blew away, and the roof began to leak. The water streaked the walls and the beautiful murals. The plaster began to fall, the carpet was stained and the pulpit Bible was ruined by water. All this because a little nail decided to quit!

But what happened to the nail? While holding the shingle, it was obscure but was useful. Buried in the mud it was just as obscure, but now it was useless and would soon become eaten by rust!

It is important you don't become like the nail in this sad tale. Every member is important to God's Church. You may, like the nail feel obscure at times. But like the nail, your absence is felt. When you are not present for worship, in some way the body of Christ hurts! We are all a vital part of the Lord's building and we need each and every nail to keep the structure strong. Don't become a rusty nail!

Author unknown

Submitted by Duane Nicol



PABC Update: R U Looking 4 a Ministry?

Norman Edwards

Our ministry to homeless people is now six years old. We have provided housing to about 450 people, with an average stay of 79 days. Our guests consist of 41% men, 32% women and 27% children. Except for those with outside jobs, all Guests attend Bible class for an hour each morning.

This is a marvelous opportunity for mature Christians to teach the truth of God, to show the love of God and sometimes carry out the judgment of God. Most of the Guests cooperate with PABC rules, pay attention in Bible classes and progress to find jobs and housing of their own. All they need is opportunity, encouragement, and sometimes help in areas where they are not skilled. (We have had guests who can fix almost anything mechanical one could give them, but really struggle to understand and fill out an eight-page form.) Some simply need rides to work until they can afford a vehicle of their own.

Unfortunately, some Guests became homeless largely because they have tried to lie and cheat their way through life, which has caused them to lose jobs, dwellings and sometimes all of their friends. Others have substance abuse issues or criminal convictions. Even some of these repent, change and grow. But it seems some Guests just want to continue their deceitful ways, trying to get what they can from PABC, take advantage of other Guests and try to do as little as possible themselves. These need to be taught that God promises them Eternal judgment—and that even their secret escapades will be found

out. They also need to be taught that a Christian mission will not help them continue their corrupt lifestyles, but would rather make them completely homeless again so that they can learn the error of their ways and change. The Bible shows God frequently dealing this way with individuals and whole nations.

This work seems very similar to the work Christians will do when they reign with Christ (2 Timothy 2:12; Rev 20:6). The purpose is to use whatever power one has to teach people Godly ways, and to show them that through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, we may have forgiveness of past sins and the power to live a righteous life. This is a profound experience that gives incredible meaning to the Christian life. It is well worth the time away from a job and other commitments.

PABC is presently seeking out a Christian couple who would want to spend a few years ministering in such a capacity. We have a spacious 2-bedroom, 2-bath quarters with private kitchen all ready to go. It is a volunteer ministry, but virtually all expenses are covered. God provides for his servants in various ways. He sent out 70 disciples and told them to take nothing with them—that everything would be provided along the way (Luke 10:1-8). Another time, when there were poor believers in Jerusalem, Paul told the Corinthians to save up things on the first day of each week so they could be sent to Jerusalem by a man of their choosing (1 Corinthians 16:1-3).

Similarly, today, some people begin a ministry with a time of prayer and a clear understanding from God that they are to do it—and they simply trust Him to take care of their needs. Others put aside money themselves or obtain commitments from fellow-believers so that they are able to carry out a full-time ministry for some number of years.

This writer, the director of this ministry, is now 60 years of age. The other brethren who have been with it from the start are all older! Ultimately, we hope to arrange for the ministry to continue when our years of service are over. Much has been accomplished to establish the pattern and rules for the ministry; the facilities have been improved and our former debts have been paid down significantly.

Any Christian brethren interested can learn more at our website, portAustin.net/pabc or call us directly at 989-738-7700.

Twins Update

The two-week-old twins mentioned in our last PABC update stayed until they were nearly eight months old and just recently moved with their mother to new housing. Raising twins is round-the-clock work for a single parent. There is a constant dual cycle of feeding, burping, changing, wiping noses, rocking, cleaning—with mother trying to eat and take care of herself as well. This mom always kept a neat room and tended to her babies' needs

constantly with very little outside help. (This is in contrast to some of the other PABC Guests who seemed to be constantly looking for somebody with whom to leave their children.) This mother patiently waded through the complex paperwork required to get into a government housing program in another county where she would eventually be able to get a job.

Without Christian homeless shelters to help in these situations, the children would almost certainly have been taken by Child Protective Services and put into the foster care system. This would create a big burden for the babies, the mother and the taxpayers. Whatever mistakes that were made to cause a single parent mother of twins to be

homeless, the babies and the taxpayers did not cause them. It costs PABC roughly \$2000 to take care of this family for 7 months—and provide free Christian teaching along the way. Total government costs for two infants in a state foster care system might be ten times that much—and no Christian teaching would be provided. 🙏



Feast at Penticton, British Colombia



2016 will be the sixth Feast of Tabernacles celebrated in Penticton, British Columbia. The previous five have been a delight; a time of rejoicing with God's people from many different organizations, worshipping one God as one family.

Penticton is a jewel, located in the wine and fruit growing area of B.C. surrounded by mountains and sandwiched between two large lakes, Okanagan to the north and Skaha to the south. It is a beautiful setting for the Feast.

There are many things to do in the area such as golfing, fishing, biking, shopping, walking trails, rock climbing and of course, touring the vineyards. There is also a wide variety of restaurants. There will be planned activities, both indoor and out.

For more information, please contact Alex Kennedy at 250-488-3624, kennoman@icloud.com

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