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PARKER MAXEY'S EDITORIALS -- (1975)

Editorials from The Missionary Revivalist
Compiled by Duane V. Maxey

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January, 1975 Editorial
A NEW YEAR IMPERATIVE

"Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:1)

When we come upon that portion of scripture found in John's gospel, chapters fourteen through seventeen, we enter the Holy of Holies of evangelical history. Here we find the record of the last moments the Lord spent in the midst of His disciples before His Passion. Words full of heavenly thought flowed from His heart of love. The evening had begun in conversation (ch. 13), but when the "supper" was finished, the language of Jesus silenced His disciples as they gathered around their Master and listened to the words of life ending at length in that sublime intercessory prayer in which His full soul was poured forth in petitions to His heavenly Father on behalf of those who were His own. These chapters deal almost exclusively with profound relationships -- the Son to the Father, both to the Spirit, Christ to the Church, the Church to the world. "Such an evening occurred but once in the world's history." (Schaff)

Trouble in this world is so common! In these chapters our Lord gives us a revelation concerning heaven. However, before speaking of the next world, He gives words of comfort on the way thither Peter had been humbled and now was troubled. Judas had defected. The atmosphere was ominous. Think it strange that in this setting we would run into God's imperative -- "Let not your heart be troubled"? What strange command is this -- a command to not be troubled when the world is full of trouble! Just what is it that causes heart trouble? We mention three basic things:

Guilt causes heart trouble! Because of sin everyone feels guilt (Rom. 3:19). Sin, and because of sin, guilt is the underlying cause of all physical, mental and spiritual suffering. "Wherever a human being is found, there will be found a conscience, however stupefied, yet troubled and agitated with guilt. This is the curse which goeth forth over the face of the whole

earth, and secretly appalls the proudest, and flashes in upon the hardest, through their steel and adamant, convictions which shake the soul with terror. Nor from this pressure of unpardoned sin has man ever found, nor will man ever find deliverance but by the blood of Christ. Let men affect to despise the Gospel Let men plunge into excesses, and seek in vice and revelry to drown the forebodings within, the fearful looking for of judgment Let men seek by mere repentance to atone for guilt, it is vain Everywhere the imploring cry is heard, Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God; shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old; will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil; shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? And blood, blood, flowing in every land, altars groaning with victims, torturing pilgrimages . . . the wail of anguished women on the Ganges, proclaim the inefficacy of repentance to give peace to the conscience. The great want of a guilty world is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ." (Seiss) Of a truth, confession (I John 1:9) and faith in Christ (Acts 16:31) must precede victory, but the grand desideratum of all the people of the earth is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Do you have guilt? Is your heart troubled? It need not be. You need not go through another year plagued with guilt.

"There is pow'r in the blood of Jesus
To make the vilest sinner whole;
Pow'r to take the guilt and condemnation
From the weary, sin-sick soul."

People are in trouble because of unbelief! The disciples were in trouble time and again because of their unbelief. Let me cite two instances. The first was on the stormy sea. They cried out, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" (Mark 4:38) After calming the troubled sea, He asked, "How is it that ye have no faith?" Just before this (v. 35) He had plainly said to them, "Let us pass over unto the other side." In the fury of the storm they had given way to unbelief. Unbelief had caused them to doubt His Word. By the same token, how many times are we in trouble because of unbelief. Unbelief is the cardinal sin of the human heart. It dates back to the Garden. It was there they disbelieved the Word of God, and because of this unbelief, all the evil and trouble has come on the human race. You may say, "I believe God's Word," but do you believe it enough to rely on it when there is no warrant in outer circumstances to do so?

The second instance we will mention was when the distraught father brought his son which had a dumb spirit (Mark 9:14-29) to the disciples to be healed and they could not. Jesus said to them, "O unbelieving generation -- without any faith." (Amplified Bible) After casting out the dumb spirit Jesus said, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Here again Christ's disciples were in trouble because of unbelief.

Unbelief -- lack of faith -- is such a persistent evil! I have thought many times of the words in the Bible where it says, "And he could there do no mighty works. . . . And he marvelled because of their unbelief" (Mark 6:5, 6). How many times are we in trouble, suffer things we need not suffer, lack where we need not lack, are so fruitless, all because of unbelief?

Follow the disciples before and after Pentecost. Note the difference in regard to their faith. What a difference the coming of the Holy Spirit made. It banished unbelief and produced a fruitfulness. Can we not see here a cure for unbelief? To battle through the moods and evils of a heart of unbelief into an absolute devotion to the Lord Jesus where the soul can, in utter abandonment, rely on the naked Word of God, is the key to a faith that pleases God and rids the soul of a blighting unbelief.

Are you plagued with unbelief? You need not be!

Fear causes heart trouble! We read such phrases as these in the Bible: "the disciples cried for fear," "hearts failing them for fear," "for fear of the Jews," "fear of death," "they feared exceedingly." Mark 10:32 states, "And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid."

Guilt and unbelief are no doubt the principle causes of fear. "All our fears are wicked, and we fear because we will not nourish ourselves in our faith" (Oswald Chambers). How dreadful to have these as companions in life when we need not have them! Death, judgment, eternal punishment in a lake of fire -- these are the things men dread. What are you dreading?

There is a way out. When you bring yourself to judgment, face yourself and others openly and honestly before God and trust His blood, you lose your fear of judgment; when, by an act of your own free will, you give up everything that death, when it comes, will mercilessly strip from you, and are willing to possess only what God would allow in His will for you, you lose the fear of death; when you submit yourself to the cleansing fire of the Holy Ghost, you no longer fear hell fire.

Furthermore, we need not be haunted by fear or apprehension concerning life in the here and now. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Heb. 13:5-6) This does not mean that we will not be tempted to fear, but in the face of every temptation or apprehension we will be able to rest in "God's say-so," for did He not say, "I will in no wise fail you." Does fear torment you? It need not! How comforting Jesus' words, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Yes, we can be delivered from "heart trouble" in this world, but not from trouble, paradoxical as that may seem. The song writer pictured the other side of the coin

"Trials dark on every hand, and we cannot understand all the ways that God would lead us to that blessed Promised land." H. W. Beecher gives the following graphic picture. "It was stormy from shore to shore, without a single fair day. But the place to which we were going was my home; there was my family; there was my church; there were my friends, who were dear to me as my own life. And I lay perfectly happy in the midst of sickness and nausea. All that the boat could do to me could not keep down the exultation and joy which rose up in me. For every single hour was carrying me nearer and nearer to the spot where was all that I loved in the world. It was deep, dark midnight when we ran into Halifax. I could see nothing. Yet the moment we came into still water I

rose from my berth and got up on deck. And as I sat near the smokestack while they were unloading the cargo, upon the wharf I saw the shadow of a person, apparently, going backward and forward near me. At last the thought occurred to me, 'Am I watched?' Just then the person addressed me, saying, 'Is this Mr. Beecher?' 'It is,' I replied. 'I have a telegram for you from your wife.' I had not realized that I had struck the continent where my family were. There, in the middle of the night, and in darkness, the intelligence that I had a telegram from home -- I cannot tell you what a thrill it sent through me! We are all sailing home; and by and by, when we are not thinking of it, some shadowy thing (men call death), at midnight, will pass by, and will call us by name, and will say, 'I have a message for you from home; God waits for you.' Are they worthy of anything but pity who are not able to bear the hardships of the voyage?"

As you enter another year and travel through its troubles and sorrows toward the city of God, "let not your heart be troubled!"

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February, 1975 Editorial
DON'T SHUN SUFFERING

"...make you perfect...after that ye have suffered a while." I Peter 5:10.

Suffering! The thoughts of it are unpleasant. We shun it. Yet it is universal. It is unavoidable. It is a vital ingredient in the process of Christian maturity. It involves the body, the mind, and the heart. We cannot be perfect without it.

Paul testified to having a perfect heart (Christian perfection) while he was striving for a perfect body (resurrection perfection). Galatians 3:15, 11. Peter is telling us about a perfection of maturity attained through suffering in this life. I Peter 5:10

Strange as it may seem on the surface, suffering has a vital ministry in the lives of God's children. It does its best and most lasting work in the heart and life of the entirely sanctified. It produces a perfection of maturity that nothing else can!

Suffering is important in the ministry of bringing the perfect in heart to maturity. In this respect it is on a par with faith. Paul made this plain when he wrote, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." Philippians 1:29

Suffering is beneficial. It is dangerous to shun suffering. This is so in regard to the sinner and those who are not in spiritual victory. To shun suffering could mean the warding off of the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. So much suffering today, even in the body as well as the mind, is directly, if not indirectly, related to sin and disobedience, and to desire peace of mind and relief from bodily suffering apart from true repentance would be superficial and an actual dismissal of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Such would leave a soul to continue on its hellward course unchecked. And yet many are seeking to take this route. Psychiatrists are kept busy in an endeavor to relieve suffering minds; healing lines are crowded with people seeking relief from physical suffering. In most of these cases it is suffering that is caused by the pressure of guilt

because of sin -- a suffering that is permitted by the mercy of God in an endeavor to awaken a soul to its real need in order to lead to repentance and deliverance. How dangerous it would be to seek relief from suffering in such a superficial way!

On the other hand, suffering is also beneficial to the pure in heart and it would be detrimental and spiritually dangerous for them to shun it. The Psalmist said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." Psalm 119:71 Statutes refer to God's everlasting law, the eternal gospel, the things that are a very part of spiritual life. Physical life is dependent upon air, water and food and these have their parallel in regard to spiritual life. Most of us have to learn the hard way -- through suffering and affliction. What did you have to suffer before you really learned that you could not make it spiritually unless you consistently took time for a daily tryst with Jesus, the lover of your soul; before you learned that you must daily feed upon His Word? "Before I was afflicted," the Psalmist continues, "I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." Psalm 119:67 Thank God for His ministry of affliction to the soul. Affliction has driven saints to the word of God, there to learn of His assurance of steadfastness and faithful love.

In Psalm 66:12 we read these strange words, "Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." What suffering, and from what trying source! But what glorious outcome from it all! Surely God's ways are "past finding out" -His ways of bringing the pure in heart to the perfection of maturity.

Our text says, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." Do you want to reach a greater place of spiritual prosperity? That trying circumstance you are in -- don't fight it; don't try to shun it; don't even try to bring it to an end. Commit it to "the God of all grace" and let Him use it to bring you to maturity in Him. Those individuals that "ride over you," that make life miserable for you, that you could be happy if it were not for them -- God has them in your life for a purpose. Afflictions work for us, not against us. 2 Cor. 4:17. You can grow good old Irish potatoes in rich Idaho soil, but it takes the soil of suffering and affliction to develop Christian maturity. Don't mow your crop down before it comes to fruition.

Humanly we are prone to ask, "How long, O Lord?" But even the time element in suffering we are to commit to God, remembering that however long (days or years) and extensive the suffering may be, it cannot be long enough to use up all God's grace. He is "the God of all grace." God in His wisdom is to decide how long and He cannot make a mistake.

Suffering is a preparation for that which is yet to come. We are called to share in God's eternal glory. This is what Jesus prayed for in His High Priestly prayer in the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. God calls us to repentance; He calls us to faith; He calls us to holiness; He calls us to perseverance; He calls us to suffering -- all in order that He might call us to share in His eternal Glory! Whatever this may mean, it would include all gratification that pure spirit is capable of receiving, with no liability to interruption or loss, and with all kinds of associated joys, each of which exceeds man's highest imagination. Who would want to forfeit such a prospect?

In such an hour we would be able to say with the Apostle Paul, "For our light affliction, which (was) for but a moment (has worked)" for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Corinthians 4:17

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March, 1975 Editorial
WHEN JESUS DREW THE LINE

The multitude followed Christ up to a point and then they left Him. He then turned to the twelve and said, "Will ye also go away?" John 6:67

Jesus had just performed the miracle of the feeding of the five-thousand, and because of this the Whole multitude began to follow Him, But He said to them, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life." John 6:26, 27

Jesus' central purpose in coming into the world was redemptive. He made this clear in His "bread of life" message that followed the miracle of the feeding of the five-thousand (read John 6:47-58). The multitude of that day was not interested in redemption. Their interest did not go beyond the Physical, temporal and earthly, so they left Him. They did not want to get involved.

Just what all is included, we might ask, in the account of Jesus' feeding of the five-thousand and His "bread of life" message that immediately followed this great miracle? It involved the great redemptive purpose of God in Christ, and man's part in it. The latter is certainly implied in Christ's using the disciples in giving the bread out to the multitudes. The question is, have we, as the multitude in Jesus' day, "gone away" from this central truth?

When the Apostle Paul faced up to the great truth of redemption through Christ and his own responsibility to it he said, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." I wonder -- are we?

Let's look for a moment at the significance of the Incarnation. Christ became man to redeem men from sin. ("Except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.") Redemption, then, should be the great central purpose of life. We should follow Christ in His great redemptive mission, and it was from this all important and central purpose that the multitude had withdrawn.

Paul states the order of his own involvement in the redemption ministry of Christ in Romans 1:1. He starts with "Paul," the new man in Christ, not "Saul" the persecutor of the way of redemption. Next, he recognizes his rightful relationship to Jesus Christ -- a servant, a "love-slave" by personal choice. Paul had sold out lock, stock and barrel to Christ and become the absolute property body, soul, mind, will -- of the One who had redeemed him. As a servant, then, Paul was by divine initiative "separated unto the gospel."

Think this over -- no one can be saved apart from becoming a "servant" of Jesus Christ, and no one can become a "servant" and not be "separated unto the gospel." Have we "gone away" from this basic truth?

Just recently an individual, one whom you would have despaired of ever getting a settled experience in the Lord, said to us, "I did not get settled in my own experience until I started out to win souls." How many people do you suppose, like this individual, are endeavoring to obtain a satisfactory, settled experience of spiritual victory apart from the claims of the Holy Spirit in leading them out into a witnessing ministry? As embarrassing as it may be, it appears easier to get people to "run to the altar," get involved in a church program, pay tithes and give offerings, do box work for missions (al 1 good in themselves) than to move a church out into a great all-out redemptive effort for the lost and to stay at it in the New Testament pattern of evangelism done by everybody (not just pastors and evangelists), everywhere (not just at the church building), and done all the time (not just a few weeks out of the year).

Nickolai Lenin, founder of the Soviet Union, memorized all four gospels word-perfect and mastered the life of Christ. He claimed that Jesus Christ was the most profound leader ever to step on the human scene from the educational point of view. Communism has the methods of Christ in spreading communism and thus are more Biblical in methodology than evangelicals. In addressing a Christian, one communist said, "You Christians have the only workable plan that will succeed in gaining followers to your cause, but you will fail where we as communists will win because we are consistently working the plan given to you in the Bible and you are not."

Acts 1:8 becomes a great indictment against a non-witnessing, professed Christian. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." We cannot set the ministry of the Holy Spirit aside and still claim to be Christian. Have we "gone away" from this truth?

The New Testament plan of evangelism is twofold, being founded on Christ's redemptive sacrifice at Calvary: to take the gospel to every individual, beginning at Jerusalem; and to bring those that respond to the gospel message to the place of maturity, teaching them all things that Christ taught them. Our great need is to put into effect the plan God gave the church.

As Jesus used the disciples to distribute the divinely supplied bread to the hungry multitude, so God has chosen to work through man to reach men with the gospel, and thus, God without man's aid will fail. On the other hand, man without the Supernatural would only succeed in building an earthly denomination or organization void of divine life, making men two-fold more the child of hell than he was in his fallen, unenlightened condition.

God help us to become involved in this ministry and to produce fruit that will abide for eternity!

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April, 1975 Editorial

IS WATER BAPTISM NECESSARY?

The practice of water baptism as a sacred ordinance has had a long history. It was a religious rite familiar to the Jews long before it was introduced by Christ. The exact time it came into use is not known. We do know that it was one of the rites by which proselytes were induced into the Jewish religion, and thereby became partakers of the benefits of the covenant. The baptism of John was a second step in the development of this ordinance. John's baptism differed both from the proselyte baptism which preceded, and the Christian baptism which followed it. John's was a baptism "Unto repentance" as a preparation for Christ and the New Covenant. Christian baptism marked a third step in its development. It differs from that of John's baptism in that it does not look forward to the coming of the Messiah, but confesses that Jesus as the Messiah has come, and also the Holy Spirit in whose dispensation it is to be administered.

From Day of Pentecost on, the rite of baptism was observed in connection with conversion as an indispensable ordinance, there being no recorded instance of conversion with which it is not connected. In Acts 2:38 Peter in his Pentecostal sermon exhorts the believers to be "baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ, and they that gladly received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41); in Acts 8:16 it is stated that the Samaritans were "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus"; while in Acts 10:48, St. Peter commands the household of Cornelius "to be baptized in the name of the Lord." Likewise, also, the Ephesian disciples were baptized under the ministry of St. Paul (Acts 19:4-6).

In the later apostolic times baptism was regarded as having superseded the Jewish rite of circumcision.

From this brief history of baptism we can gather that in its nature and design, Christian Baptism is a solemn sacrament of the Church "signifying the acceptance of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ"; and it is a pledge with "full purpose of obedience in holiness and righteousness." From the divine standpoint, it is also a pledge of the bestowal of grace.

"Baptism, as a Christian ordinance," says Dr. Wakefield, "may be defined to be the application of pure water to a proper subject, by a lawful administrator, in the name of the sacred Trinity. (1) It is the application of pure water, as the language of the apostle clearly indicated, 'Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water,' (Heb. 10:22). (2) The water must be applied to a proper subject; not to an inanimate object, but to a human being under certain circumstances. (3) The ordinance must be performed by a lawful administrator; and as the commission to baptize was given to ministers of the gospel alone, no others have a right to perform this office. And, (4) It must be administered in the name of the sacred Trinity, 'baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost' (Matt. 28:19, 20)."

Christian Baptism is of universal and perpetual obligation for two reasons -- our Lord's express command (Matt. 28:19, 20), and the apostolic practice (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12). Baptism is a solemn ordinance which should be strictly observed. It is clearly evident from the above scriptures that the apostles administered baptism immediately upon profession of faith; and if it was deemed necessary then, it can be no less so now. "But when they believed Philip preaching the things

concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women (Acts 8:12).

Some have argued that because Christ baptizes with the Holy Ghost, water baptism is no longer necessary. That it superseded John's baptism is doubtless true; but as we have already indicated, there is a wide distinction between John's baptism with water as a preparatory rite, and Christ's baptism with water as a sign and seal of an inward work of grace. Water baptism was administered by the apostles after the opening of the Christian dispensation, which would clearly indicate that it is an ordinance of perpetual obligation.

We would further point out that baptism, being an initiatory rite, is to be administered only once. It establishes a permanent covenant and is not therefore to be repeated. The baptized one may fall away, but the gracious promise of God still stands. It cannot be made of none effect. If he falls away, he needs to repent and believe, and the Father stands ready to restore him, but he does not need to be rebaptized. As an initiatory rite also, baptism is the visible act by which members are admitted into the Church of Christ as a visible society. This has been the faith of the church from the beginning, and to deny it is to deny the church has any initiatory ordinance.

Christian Baptism is a sacrament and as such it is both a sign and a seal. As a sign, it represents spiritual purification. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you (Ezek. 36: 25, 26). So also our Lord declares, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (John 3: 5). Here, evidently, the sign is the outward baptism with water, and the thing signified is the inner work of the Spirit. Baptism is also a seal. "It is," says Dr. Shedd, "like the official seal on a legal document. The presence of the seal inspires confidence in the genuineness of the title-deed; the absence of the seal awakens doubt and fears. Nevertheless, it is the title-deed, not the seal, that conveys the title."

I am afraid in too many instances water baptism is a neglected sacrament in our churches. We have herein given a brief review of H. Orton Wiley's teaching in his Christian Theology Volume III, pp. 161-176 on Christian Baptism. It is a clear expression of our position as a church. While we would not minimize in the least those great cardinal doctrines of regeneration and entire sanctification, we must strive for a balanced ministry. We do believe in the two Christian Ordinances -- The Lord's Supper and Water Baptism -- as instituted by Christ and these should not be neglected. Numbers of our people across the country have never been baptized because they have never been given the opportunity. It is up to the ministry to be faithful in administering these sacred sacraments of the church. As instituted and commanded by the Lord, they should be obeyed and our people should have the opportunity to be baptized by water and also to partake of the Lord's Supper at regular intervals. Besides this, it is a blessed privilege of the ministry to administer water baptism to those converts that are the fruit of his ministry.

We trust the ministers of our churches will be faithful in administering these Christ ordained sacraments!

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May, 1975 Editorial
WHOSE VOICE DO YOU HEAR?

"There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world; and none of them is without signification." I Cor. 14:10

Monitoring a space ship in outer space would be impossible without a computer. The multitude of operations that need monitoring and are happening simultaneously during a space flight (the breathing and heart beat of the spacemen, their body temperature, the temperature inside and outside the space ship, its speed, etc.) are radioed back to earth by beep, beep sounds of different frequencies and pitches. All these scores of sound coming in together make one loud roar indistinguishable to the human ear. The computer breaks these down and feeds them into different channels so that the heart beat (for example) of one of the astronauts can be clearly and separately distinguished from all the other sounds.

The human mind is a marvelous computer and with the freedom of the will has the inborn ability to pick out and concentrate on what it wants to hear and heed.

There are a multitude of voices that call to us from the cradle to the grave. Rocks, tin cans, trees, all have a voice. To the carefree lad a rock says, "throw me;" the tin can says, "kick me;" a tree says, "climb me." Our physical appetites and passions have a voice that calls for attention. Our body has a voice. It calls for food, for ease, for rest. There are voices that allure to evil. The unregenerate "self" has a voice. It calls for the way of least resistance. It hears the voice of evil calling to sin.

Voices get stronger as they are heeded and tend to tune out other voices. The voice of materiality and earthly living, the voice of lust, the voice of covetousness, when heeded weaken the voice of purity and morality. In the midst of all these voices is the voice of Wisdom. "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets." Prov. 1:20. It is the voice of God penetrating the sound barrier of every soul and demanding a hearing.

We are admonished in the Scriptures to heed how we hear. Voices come to us unbidden and call for attention. The truth is, we hear what we give our attention to hear. We have the ability to tune out or tune in voices that come to make themselves heard. We are constantly doing this and oftentimes unconsciously, so habitual do we become in our moral being. More often than not our spiritual poverty results from a hearing problem. If we had only listened to what God had to say, but we were too busy listening to other voices. In one place Jesus admonished, "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith." How much trouble, suffering and heartache could be avoided if only we would set our wills to hear and heed what God has to say.

It is risky not to hear rightly. When we are young and healthy and hearing is keen there is no problem to tune out what we do not want to hear and tune in what we desire to hear. This is not the case with older people, when time and age have taken their toll. They lose that ability, when a multitude of voices are all speaking, to understand any clearly. Likewise we can impair our spiritual hearing until the voice of God can no longer be discerned amidst many voices that scream

at us. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. 3:20. The implication here is that a person may get to the place where he cannot hear God's voice in a way to discern it from other voices. Loss of hearing with the physical ear takes place gradually and at first unnoticeably. It begins with the higher and finer pitches of sound. Likewise in the spiritual realm. The cause for the loss of hearing in this realm usually begins with carelessness in heeding the voice of the Spirit in little seemingly insignificant things -talking past that gentle voice or check of the Spirit, failing to heed His voice in a dress requirement, not giving priority to the voice of the Spirit as He endeavors to lead us into a closer and deeper walk with Christ, letting the pressures of life's duties drown out His tender, still, small voice. How many today have had better "hearing" days in the past than they now have! The call to prayer now has grown dim. His tender voice is not near any more. It now has become the nagging voice of conviction and a reminder of a better day and of duties left undone. The call to intercessory prayer, to witnessing to lost humanity, to praise, are voices that cease to call. The romance is gone. Have we become a burdenless, prayerless people having lost the voice of the Spirit? God stir us and awaken us until we will one more time be able to hear as we should.

The admonition of the Scriptures is to learn to hear well. Build habits into your spiritual life of right hearing. To do this we need first of all to learn His voice. This can only be done as we heed and obey when we hear! Many have never learned this lesson. "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." John 10:4, 5. Again in John 18:37 we read, "Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice." It takes a sanctified heart to hear rightly the voice of God and to distinguish it from the voice of "self." On the Mount of Transfiguration the "chosen three" heard the voice of God saying to them, "this is my beloved Son . . . hear ye him." It took Pentecost to solve the "hearing" problem of the disciples. It will take the same today.

If man will tune in to the voice of God -- to the sinner it will mean salvation from a life of sin; to the regenerated it will lead unerringly to the land of perfect rest and purity of heart; to the sanctified it will lead to a life of Service, to a life of prayer, of suffering, of sacrifice, of witnessing, of constant victory over sin and self.

How is your hearing?

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June, 1975 Editorial

Parker Maxey did not insert one of his own Editorials in this issue of the Missionary Revivalist, but instead used a "Guest Editorial" by Spencer Johnson, and, desiring to include in this collection only "Parker Maxey's Editorials" I have omitted the June, 1975 Editorial therefrom.

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July, 1975 Editorial

THE BACK SIDE OF THE DESERT

Exodus 3:1

Moses was eighty years old when he found himself on the backside of the desert. This "backside of the desert" experience came to him after he had made his decisive choice to suffer with God's people rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. It was after he gave up a throne, riches, position, power and a reputation among men. This experience came after he had tried in his own efforts and through his own ingenuity to fulfill the call God gave him. The wisdom of his choice will bear up under the closest scrutiny, but in his own efforts to make his chosen calling a success he utterly failed and was forced to flee to the desert to save his life. After all his extensive training in the wisdom of that day, his brilliant military career and his position among the peers of his day, he found himself alone on the backside of a desert with a small band of sheep. He had proved to be of no good to God, a failure among his people and a disappointment to himself. Something had to take place within Moses before he could be a mighty instrument in the hands of God to deliver His people out of bondage and fulfill God's plan for his life. The real desert was in the heart of Moses and it was only God who could make this desert "rejoice and blossom like the rose."

The trip to the backside of the desert proved to be for Moses the long road that led to the end of self. Far too many people never travel this road and far too many who start never get to the end of it. For this reason Christ three times pronounced doom on fruitless professors of religion.

It was on the backside of the desert that Moses came to the mountain of God. It was here where self got out of focus and he was enabled to see God clearly. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Moses saw clearly that it was God who was going to deliver His people and not himself -- but God was going to do it through His servant as the instrument (Exodus 3:8, 10). How wonderful it is to see God, His plan, His purpose, His way -- to be just an instrument in His hands -- to become solely and completely the property of God for Him to work His will in and through.

It was on the backside of the desert where the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush. Thank God for the burning, cleansing fire!

The burning bush unconsumed by fire captivated the attention of Moses. The "unclean ... creeping things that creep upon the earth" (Lev. 11:29, 30) were destroyed or fled in terror when the bush got on fire! It was the symbol of a work God would perform in him. It is the fire of God that burns out all carnal traits (the sensual self) but leaves unconsumed the essential self to be a marvel in the eyes of those who behold.

It was on the backside of the desert where Moses learned to reverence and fear a holy God. He had learned by bitter experience his own inadequacy. Now he learned what God could do with even a shepherd's staff (Ex. 4:24) if given over in obedience, and he himself was now prepared and ready to be a pliable instrument in God's hands.

It was from the backside of the desert that Moses came forth as one of the mightiest instruments of God among men. On the backside of the desert is an unmarked grave where the carnal Moses died and was buried and the meek Moses came forth.

Check through the sacred record and the annals of church history. Who is there that has done exploits for God that has not had a "backside of the desert" experience?

Have you, reader, been to the backside of the desert?

"Thou Christ of burning, cleansing flame,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!
Thy blood-bo't gift today we claim,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire;
Look down and see this waiting host,
Give us the promised Holy Ghost,
We want another Pentecost,

Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!
"God of Elijah, hear our cry,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!

He'll make us fit to live or die,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire;
To burn up ev'ry trace of sin.
To bring the light and glory in,
The revolution now begin,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!

"'Tis fire we want, for fire we plead,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!
The fire will meet our ev'ry need,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire;
For strength to ever do the right,
For grace to conquer in the fight,
For pow'r to walk the world in white,
Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!"

-- John T. Benson, Jr.

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August, 1975 Editorial
THE KEY TO OUR SUCCESS

"Let love be without dissimulation." Romans 12:9

When it comes to our relationship to God and people we are commanded to lay aside all pretense. Sincerity is an indispensable ingredient of goodness; it stamps a valuable character upon all our actions, and recommends them to the favor both of God and man. Hypocrisy, play acting, on the other hand, is the blackest of all transgressions, and bears the badge of the original liar. We are to have no hypocritical love; we are not to allow our love to wear a mask; we are commanded to make no empty profession. We are commanded to love God and our neighbor. By obedience to the one and acts of benevolence to the other we are to show that our love is sincere. We are commanded to love like God loves.

Jesus demonstrated this unfeigned love toward His disciples and He is our example that we should follow in His steps. "... having loved his own which, were in the world, he loved them unto the end." John 13:1

Jesus loved them, knowing. He was not deceived by the profuseness of men's acceptance of Him in the days of His popularity. In the beginning of His ministry "many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." John 2: 23-25 Jesus knew what others did not know. He "knew from the beginning.., who should betray him." Jesus knew and kept on loving. Too often we love until we know. With the gaining of knowledge, the knowledge of something that existed when love was shown, there too often comes a loss of love, a cooling off, a freezing up of one's attitude toward a brother. Barriers are raised up. Men divide off into separate groups. All because we have not learned to love like Jesus loves.

Jesus took no one into His confidence concerning the covetousness of Judas and what He knew it would finally lead him to. He did deal with the awful sin of covetousness, Judas' besetting sin, more than any other one trait of the carnal heart. He was faithful to Judas' soul, but did not unnecessarily expose him to others of His followers. Nor did Judas feel less of Jesus' love than the others did. He was not ostracized from the group because of what Jesus knew about him. Too often, to gain knowledge of the weaknesses, failures, and even carnality of brothers and sisters in the Lord (whether they be of our particular fellowship or not) is a signal to hunt somebody up and discuss it with them, and there the matter grows in proportion as it spreads.

I am dealing here with this matter of love. Can we learn something here from Jesus?

Jesus loved impartially! He had no favorites. He didn't take some into His confidence and leave others out. John the beloved, who leaned on Jesus' bosom, didn't know what Jesus knew about Judas' intended betrayal. There was no "inner circle" with Jesus when it came to His knowledge of the heart condition of others. Jesus was absolutely impartial. They each one felt and knew His love toward them. They did not feel themselves out of the bounds of His love nor feel He had excluded them from His circle.

Can we learn something here from Jesus?

Jesus loved them in spite of their carnal outbursts. No, Jesus did not condone evil in men -- James' and John's position seeking, Peter's impetuous outbursts, Judas' love of money, Thomas' carnal unbelief, Philip and Andrew's lack of faith in Jesus' ability to meet the need of the multitude.

He kept on loving them in spite of it all. It must have been His love and patience that bound them to Him. How they must have felt His love and concern. He did not let facts or factions divide them into separate camps. They felt safe and wanted in His presence.

Can we learn something here from Jesus?

Jesus failed. He failed to see Judas make it to Pentecost. When he (Judas) failed, Jesus was clear in his case! He had no past record to be ashamed of or for which He had to make amends. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

We are without excuse! Some may no doubt say, "Well, Jesus is God and we are finite." But herein is to be found the miracle of Pentecost. This same love that Jesus had, He prayed that we might have (John 17:26). It is this same divine love that God designs to shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit.

Have you received this experience? Do you love like Jesus loves?

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September, 1975 Editorial
"WHAT SHALL I SAY?"
John 12:27

We have just concluded a quadrennial conference in the Bible Missionary Church. This month marks the beginning of another four year period. The tomorrows look ominous as far as this present age is concerned. Tribulation days may begin any moment. The rapture is imminent. When the hour of crucifixion drew near Jesus said: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." The crisis hour was at hand. We must remember that our blessed Lord took upon Him our weaknesses, that He might sanctify them to us. In commenting on this verse Adam Clarke wrote, "The sense of our Lord's words is this: When a man feels a fear of a sudden or violent death, it is natural to him to cry out, Father, save me from this death! for he hopes that the glory of God and his welfare may be accomplished some other way, less dreadful to his nature: but why should I say so, seeing for this very purpose, that I might die this violent death for the sins of mankind, I am come into the world, and have almost arrived at the hour of my crucifixion."

Although it is a natural reaction for the human to draw back from suffering, we, as God's children, should find our greatest joy and satisfaction knowing we are living in the will of God regardless of outer circumstances. "What shall I say?" What is my reaction, my purpose, my desire as I face tomorrow? What is the mission of the Bible Missionary Church in this day? The church can only fulfill its mission as each member seeks to do God's will.

We should live to glorify God. This is the supreme purpose for man's existence. This was Jesus' supreme desire, "Father, glorify thy name." This simply means to glorify God -- Himself, His wisdom, His truth, His mercy, His justice, His holiness, His goodness, His patience, His every attribute, all that He is. We can do this by:

Manifesting faith in God faith concerning His unfailing care; faith concerning the future; a faith that makes the sorrowful rejoice; a faith that makes light the load of the heavy laden; a faith that drives us on to do the impossible; a faith that, though sore tempted, does not yield to discouragement; a faith that obeys; a faith that drives out fear.

Someone has said: "There is probably no agent that brings us more undesirable conditions than fear." It is such a dreadful foe that the "fearful" head the list of those whose allotted portion is the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). Fear is a most expensive guest to entertain. It is connected with lack of faith. Fear will not let God do what He can and would do. Fear cannot glorify God.

From the pen of S. L. Brengle we read: "Let us be wise concerning God For three years Jesus was training a few stupid men to believe, so that they might reveal God to the world and turn it upside down; but they were slow to learn, and again and again He said: 'O ye of little faith,' 'How is it that ye have no faith?' 'If ye have faith' (Matt. 8:26; Mark 4:40; Matt. 27: 20). His heart was hurt by their mistrust. But oh, how glad He was when He found someone who believed True faith is the most wonderful thing in the world. With it a handful of ignorant Jewish fishermen and publicans turned the world upside down." God help us to glorify the Father with our faith. "Have faith in God."

Doing what is at hand to do. One of the most effective ways to glorify God is to do our present duty faithfully and joyfully. We quote again from Samuel Brengle's writings: "If we begin to be anxious about the future it saps our joy, it robs us of our trust in God, it blinds our eyes to those things which we should now do to make our future safe.

"My very anxiety about the future may help to produce conditions that will favor my fears and bring them in overwhelming power upon me.

"Some years ago two or three divisional officers became suspicious about their future in the Army, and lost their joy and power. The miserable spiritual gangrene spread to the corps officers, and they lost their joy and gladness and sweet, simple trust in straining their poor eyes to look into the future that God had hidden from them, and for which He commanded them to trust Him without an anxious thought. Since the officers had lost the joy and power, the poor, starved soldiers lost heart and interest, and then the light and glory fled from the meetings, the public lost interest and ceased to come, the finances shrank, and the whole work languished, withered and almost died. Those poor, foolish, fearful doubters could not see that their anxiety about the future was producing the conditions that would bring all their fears upon them like an Alpine avalanche; and not until men full of faith and joy and the Holy Ghost rejoiced and prayed and shouted and rallied the doubting, fearing ones, did the work recover from the blighting effect of their fear and unbelief."

God help us as Bible Missionary people to find our own personal niche in the will of God where He has providentially placed us and there labor faithfully, fearlessly and believingly for His glory and the good of His kingdom.

Looking unto Jesus. Herein lies the key to a steady, victorious life now and a future of perennial happiness. It includes an inner liberty which causes one to delight in looking away from the world and all secular concerns to Jesus and all the spiritual and heavenly things connected with Him. Francis de Sales described it this way: "The liberty of spirit consists in keeping the heart totally disengaged from every created thing in order that it may follow the known will of God." The "joy that was set before him (Jesus)" (Heb. 12:2), a joy that far exceeded the sufferings of the cross with all of its shame, was the joy of fulfilling the will of His Father.

What shall I say? I say, let me glorify God; let me glorify Him NOW in this present moment; let me not grieve Him with unbelief; let my eyes be fixed continuously on Jesus:

Since my eyes were fixed on Jesus,
I've lost sight of all beside,
So enchained my spirit's vision,
Looking at the Crucified.
All for Jesus! All for Jesus!
Looking at the Crucified.

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October, 1975 Editorial
ALL OUT FOR SOULS

This was the theme adopted by the recent General Conference for the coming quadrennium of the Bible Missionary Church. We have now launched out on this another quadrennium of endeavor as Jesus tarries. Ominous storm clouds are gathering as we approach tribulation days. Fear should grip our hearts lest we become an ineffective tool in the hands of God.

Five things were impressed upon my mind during our gathering at Oklahoma City that should spell success for the Bible Missionary Church in Kingdom work if they are made dominant throughout the quadrennium.

First and foremost, it must always be "holiness unto the Lord." This was depicted on the large sign in front of the auditorium where the conference was held. We were reminded again and again as we entered the auditorium for each session of this theme of holiness. We must be a people -- children of light walking with Jesus in garments of white. We must live lives that are untarnished with sin, with God's Holy Spirit abiding within. This must be more than a motto or a name to be known by. We must be holy men and women of God. It is the holy people of God who have separated themselves from the world and kept the fire at white heat on the altar of their heart who have kept God's cause going on this earth. God forbid that we ever lose this peculiar brand or fail in our calling.

Underneath the "all out for souls" depicted on the large banner were the words from Matthew 9:38, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." Prayer must be our vanguard and reward in this holy warfare. A praying people will be a victorious people, a conquering people "terrible as an army with banners." If we fail in the prayer

closet, if we do not constantly seek counsel from God, we will go down in defeat. This puts an awful responsibility on every individual member. A church is not more holy than its members are holy; it is no stronger in prayer than its individual members are strong and victorious in prayer. The lack of prayer is back of every defeat, and by the same token, victory and spiritual progress are the result of prayer. It is Holy Ghost praying that helps a group keep united.

In unity there is strength, and this was the third impressive thing about our gathering. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Debates were prevalent as contrasting views were aired, but all in a spirit of love and unity. How wonderful and even delightful is unity, but we must not be presumptive here. This unity that we all felt at the General Conference, without a doubt, was the fruit of previous months of prayer and fasting of the godly, concerned members across the nation and on foreign soil. It was extremely encouraging to this writer to believe that we do have a praying band of people in our Zion that still have power in prayer to control the course of events. It was nothing short of a miracle that our two general leaders were re-elected by the exact same number of votes. Saints of God, don't let down now! Keep on praying and fasting and believing for God's glory, the unity of His people and the ingathering of the lost.

Fourth, the vision of an "end time" ministry was not lacking in our midst. "All out for souls" was expressed as our responsibility to this "end time" generation.

Finally, I seemed to sense in the gathering a feeling that our time was short. This was "the seventh" General Conference of The Bible Missionary Church that significant "seven" -- and there was that strong feeling that this could very well be the last. Our Lord is coming back to earth again and we are watching for his coming as we labor, watch and pray.

In conclusion we would add this word of caution. We are not boastful in what we have thus far written. We, as a people, still proclaim the message of holiness; we did feel the mighty impact of prayer in the conference: we did witness a beautiful spirit of unity; the urgency to evangelize was an oft struck note in our gathering, and all this with the consciousness of the imminent coming of Christ. These things do not in themselves, however, spell ongoing success unless these dominant notes -- holiness of heart and life, intercessory prayer, unity of spirit, evangelization, awareness of preparation for His imminent coming -continue to be struck down through the days ahead. "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." We have not finished our course yet. We are called upon to accomplish our warfare in the midst of the most untoward generation that has ever lived. Our conference was held in beautiful, commodious, luxurious and pleasing surroundings. While we thoroughly enjoyed this, we are not unaware of the dangers of being surrounded with the comfortable materialism of our day, We must beware lest we be engulfed in materialism, overrun by worldly trends, stymied by self-complacency and our zeal cooled to lukewarmness.

Materialism will destroy our piety. Worldliness will shear us of our power.

Self-complacency will cripple and finally kill our evangelism.

Denominational pride will reduce us to lukewarmness.

Danger signs are all around us now! Let us continue to strike the dominant notes that spell victory!

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November, 1975 Editorial
ARE YOU INCLUDED?

Fortunate are those who are qualified to lay hold of God's promises! It is not everyone who has a right to claim the promises of God. Every promise has a condition. I am thinking of Romans 8:28 where it says "all things work together for good." But "all things" do not work together for good for just anyone. The first condition is that we love God. To love God means that we keep His commandments, all of them (John 14:15" I John 3:22) -- we will not break His Sabbath, we will not covet, we will put God first in everything, we do love God's laws. Another condition is that we must be among those who are called according to His purpose. The purpose of God is that we be conformed to the image of His Son. God's Son possesses moral perfection. For us this amounts to nothing less than holiness of heart and life. It is these two conditions that qualify one for claiming Romans 8:28.

The text does not say that all things separately work for good, but "all things together" work for good. Many things of themselves are not good, but God can put them in the mixture and cause them to add to the good of the whole. I want us to notice seven things that this promise will do for these who qualify to claim it:

1. It will lift them above disappointments. It will give to them a faith that will enable them to trust God in the midst of the most severe trial or storm of life and to believe that He is in control and knows how to bring benefit out of it. In his "Plain Account of Christian Perfection," Wesley states, "The best helps to growth in grace -- and we could add, victory over what could be classed as disappointments -- are the ill-usage, the affronts, and the losses which befall us. We should receive them with thankfulness... The readiest way to escape from our sufferings is to be willing they should endure as long as God pleases." In the Christian philosophy of life and in the light of Romans 8:28, disappointments become His appointments. There is absolutely no way to defeat a person who possesses this kind of faith in God. Job certainly qualified to claim a promise like this one in Romans 8:28.

2. It places them under the protective wing of God and keeps them secure in their confidence that God is in control of "all things." The kind of security this text talks about does not necessarily protect from material loss or physical harm or suffering -- it may include these and it may not. We mean here the keeping power of God that Peter talks about concerning those "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." It is that security that comes from total resignation -- a true resignation consisting "in a thorough conformity to the whole will of God, who wills and does all (excepting sin) which comes to pass in the world. In order to this we have only to embrace all events, good and bad, as His will.

"We ought quietly to suffer whatever befalls us, to bear the defects of others and our own, to confess them to God in secret prayer, or with groans which cannot be uttered; but never to speak a sharp or peevish word, not to murmur or repine but thoroughly willing that God should treat you in the manner that pleases Him.

"We are to bear with those we cannot amend, and to be content with offering them to God. This is true resignation. And since He has borne our infirmities, we may well bear those of each other for His sake." --Wesley

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, is certainly an example of perfect resignation to the will and providence of God and could well qualify to claim a promise like Romans 8:28 as his very own.

3. It will make everything work in a pattern of good. The poet expressed the faith one should possess along this line when he penned these words:

My life is but a weaving,
Between my Lord and me.
I cannot see the pattern
He weaveth steadily.
Full oft He weaveth sorrow
And I in foolish pride,
Forget He sees the upper,
And I the under side.

We can see how Romans 8:28 worked in the life of Ruth the Moabitess. She lived to see the day when "all things" had worked together for her good. She qualified for this by her simple faith and ready obedience.

4. It will turn catastrophes into stepping stones to heaven. There is no real catastrophe outside the loss of personal faith in God. Through all the vicissitudes of life, by God's grace one can be made better and not bitter if he can lay hold of this great promise recorded in Romans 8:28. If one can qualify to lay hold of this promise every apparent catastrophe can help build for him a richer habitation in heaven. His character will be enhanced by it. When we depart this life we will be stripped of everything but our character. If we live by this promise here in this life our character will stand in the day of Judgment. Paul qualified. He testified, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." He proved by his life that he believed "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."

5. It will bring them to a place where neither men nor devils can inflict spiritual detriment upon them. Chrysostom was brought before the Emperor, who said; "I will banish thee." He replied: "Thou canst not, for the world is my Father's house." Then said the Emperor: "I will kill thee." "That is not in thy power, for my life is hid with Christ in God." The Emperor threatened: "I will deprive thee of all that thou possessest." Chrysostom replied: "That, too, is impossible, for

my treasure is in heaven, and my riches are within me." "I will separate thee from all thy companions, and thou shalt not have one friend left." The preacher replied: "Neither canst thou do that, for my Divine Friend will never leave me. I defy thee, proud Emperor; thou canst do me no harm at all."

Chrysostom surely must have known something about the promise in Romans 8:28.

6. It will protect them from an untimely death and allow God to fulfill His will through them on earth. Christians -true believers -- are not fatalists. Man is a creature of free choice. Fate does not determine what man does and is. Neither is man's time to depart this life left to fate. Those who die untimely deaths -untimely from God's viewpoint -- are those who by their free choice have either taken themselves out of God's will or never accepted God's will for themselves in the first place.

King David illustrates one who would have a right to claim Romans 8:28 at this point. We read in Acts 13:22b, 36, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will... For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep." David yielded himself to the will of God and when God got through with him on earth He took him home.

7. It will hold them steady until God can work His purpose amidst the seeming contradictions of life -- if they qualify to lay hold of this marvelous promise. It is said of Joseph in Psalms 105:19, "Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him." Joseph's life is a commentary on Romans 8:28.

Pause a moment, reader, are you included in this promise?

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December, 1975 Editorial
BACK TO BETHLEHEM

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Micah 5:2

Micah is considered to be one of the most Messianic of the minor prophets. While Isaiah prophesied the virgin birth (7:14) of our Saviour, Micah prophesied His village birth. When there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, seven hundred years later in the days of Herod the Great, seeking the birthplace of Jesus, the Jewish rabbis were able to direct them to the village of Bethlehem by this prophecy.

"Back to Bethlehem" might well become a rallying cry not only to Micah and his contemporaries, but to us in this day as well.

George L. Robinson in his book *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, suggests that "back to Bethlehem" meant to the prophet and his contemporaries "back to David, who conquered the nation's enemies and secured their peace; to David, who established a national capital and organized a central government; to David, who executed judgment and righteousness in the land; to David of whom Isaiah prophesied 'a throne shall be established in loving kindness' (Isa. 16:5); to David, of whom Jeremiah predicted Jehovah would raise up 'a righteous branch' (Jer. 23:5; 33:15); to David, the constant ideal of the theocracy! The Messiah of Israel's coming Age, in other words, would be like David."

To us, however, of this late gospel age, "back to Bethlehem" means far more than it did or could mean to Micah and the people of his day. To us it means back to Jesus Christ, the son of God, who was also born in Bethlehem. Might I suggest also that "back to Bethlehem" means to us:

Back to Jesus Christ the conquering Prince of Peace! At the time of Christ's birth we read "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them... And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men."

Back to Jesus Christ, the friend of humble sinners and the Redeemer of the soul. Micah was the prophet of the poor and championed their cause against the oppression of the rich. It is reported in the gospels concerning Christ that "the poor have the gospel preached to them," and "the common people heard him gladly." Oh, that the gospel might freely and continuously flow through us to the poor people and the common people of our day.

Back to the Christ of uttermost salvation. Jesus Christ marched to the front of the battle and alone procured for every soul deliverance from the lurking, subtle and deceitful inner master -- that enemy that so successfully robs the soul of inner peace, the carnal self, -- and establishes every soul who wills it, in that blessed experience of perfect soul rest. The man who does not believe it is possible to be cleansed from original sin in this life by faith in Christ evinces to all the world that he is still living in the dark deception and deep defilement of his own unholy heart.

Back to Jesus Christ, the interceding High Priest. "Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. 7:25 He intercedes to make available all benefits to His trusting people; He intercedes for the sanctification of His people; for the preservation of His people on earth; He intercedes to save His people to the uttermost.

Back to Jesus Christ, the immutable one. We read in Hebrews 7:24, "This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." Changelessness guarantees complete fulfillment of God's changeless purposes. Whatever excuse there might be for living an intermittent life under the ever-changing priesthood of the Old Covenant, there is no possible excuse in these New Covenant Days. The life which our High Priest ministers from within the veil is, like Himself, an unchanging life. It is a heavenly life administered unto us by the power of the Holy Spirit. The song writer had it right when he wrote, "Change and decay in all around I see." But his prayer was, "O Thou who changest not, abide with me!"

Back to Jesus Christ, the Lord and Master of life. Multitudes today are giving a mental assent to Christ as Savior but denying His lordship in their lives. As King David established a national capital and organized a central government, just so Christ would make every heart His throne and govern the lives of all who will yield to Him. The principles of His kingdom were laid down by Micah of old when he penned these words, "what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Back to Jesus Christ, the only true pattern for successful, victorious daily living.

Oh, to be like Thee! Oh, to be like Thee,
Blessed Redeemer, pure as thou art!
Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness;
Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.

We sing it. Do we mean it?

Back to Jesus Christ, who through His resurrection brings hope beyond the tomb. Paul expressed the deep longing of the human heart here when he wrote, "That! may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

Back to Jesus Christ who is soon to execute judgment in the world and bring about a reign of righteousness on the earth.

Yes, back to Christ the Solid Rock. My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

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THE END