

Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

Second Class Postage Paid at Mammoth Spring, Ark.

VOLUME 12

Mammoth Spring, Arkansas 72554

November 1978

Number 12

After Death, What Then? Reasonable Service

By Ordell Heavin

Numerous questions have been asked about death and what is beyond death. Such questions as: What is to take place after death? Is there life beyond the grave? Does death end it all? And, if a man die will he live again?

Through his word, God has revealed the answers to these questions. In 1 Thess. 4:13 Paul wrote, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep..." He then reminded them, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." These words assure us that the grave is not the end of it all. Man shall live again!

To study the destiny of man beyond the grave it might help to consider first his beginning or origin. In Psalm 8:4 David asked, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" There are two possible things to consider from this question. First, man is a mere animal who has evolved from the unknown past, or, second, he is a spirit-being who was created by the act of God. If man is nothing more than a highly evolved animal, then all the questions concerning death can be easily answered. Death is the end of all. However, even nature would suggest that this is not true, man is something more than just a mere animal. The Bible teaches that man was created in the image of God, animals were not. In 1 Thess. 5:23 man is pictured as being "spirit and soul and body."

What is death? The Bible teaches that physical death is the separation of the Spirit from the body. When this separation takes place the body shall return to the dust of the earth, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it (Eccl. 12:7). The body returns to its origin, the dust, while the spirit returns to its origin, God. Longfellow expressed this idea when he wrote:

Life is real, life is earnest!

And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returneth,

Was not spoken of the soul.

James wrote that "The body without the spirit is dead." (James 2:26) He does not say that the spirit is dead without the body, but the body is dead without the spirit. The spirit does not die.

Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines death as "That separation (whether natural or violent) of the soul from the body by which the life on earth is ended." The soul departs from the body at death. In Gen. 35:18 as Rachel died, the Bible states that "her soul was in departing (for she died)..."

Death is also described as giving up the ghost or spirit. When Abraham died, the Bible states, "Then Abraham gave up the ghost and died." (Gen. 25:8) While upon the cross, Jesus said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost." (Luke 23:46)

Too, death is described as the departure of the soul being like the flying away of a bird (Psalm 90:10). Then "we" who "fly away" are the spirits not the bodies. So death is the departure of the soul from this world. In Phil. 1:23-24 Paul spoke of death as a departure, saying, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." In 2 Tim. 4:6 Paul said, "The time of my departure is at hand." The Greek word from which departure is translated carries the idea of "loosening the mooring or anchor-ropes of a ship, pulling up the anchor, and setting sail on a voyage."

The human body is a tabernacle or dwelling place in which the real man lives. Death is referred to as the putting off of this tabernacle. The apostle Peter pictured his death as the putting off "this my tabernacle", in 2 Peter 1:13-15. And in 2 Cor. 5:1 Paul wrote, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." So in death the soul moves out of this earthly house, and departs to be with God.

However, not all who die are destined to live with God eternally. There are two destinations for the souls of mankind. In Matt. 7:13-14 Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and

By W. L. Totty

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:1-2)

The people of Paul's time were familiar with the animal sacrifices which the Jews had offered for centuries. Paul, taking advantage of their knowledge of those sacrifices, referred to our life as Christians by stating that we offer our bodies a living sacrifice. Those sacrifices which the Jews had offered were dead sacrifices; but the sacrifices of Christian people are living; they are active, they are holy and, thus, they are acceptable unto God.

Paul said that the presenting of our bodies as a living sacrifice is a "reasonable service". Thus, we are assured that nothing which the Lord requires of us is unreasonable. If we were to live perfect lives, that still would not be unreasonable. I am sure that what little some of us do in contrast with the great blessings which we receive from God could be considered very unreasonable.

"And be not conformed to this world." The American Standard Version says, "And be not fashioned according to this world." The word "conformed" means in accordance with the world. People's being conformed to this world is the reason we have so much trouble and sin in the world today. This also accounts for the great problem of juvenile delinquency as well as adult delinquency. Even at times some people in the church become so interested in conforming their lives to the world that they neglect their children and not only lose their own souls but the souls of their children as well. They sell their children's souls for the pleasures of this world. Fathers and mothers sometimes strive after the things of this world and neglect the weightier matters of transforming themselves by the "renewing of their minds". The apostle says that by renewing our minds

(Continued on Page 2)

(Continued on Page 4)

**FULTON COUNTY
GOSPEL NEWS**

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EDITORS: Erwin Cowen
and Harold Turner

So, You Married, Now What?

By Glynn V. Purdy

No one made you do it. Marriage is giving up the known for the unknown. Many marry to "get away from home" so they can "do as they please," only to learn that no one can really do as he pleases. Marriage is a mutual arrangement. It must be based on mutual love. Enough love will hold any couple together, solve any problem, survive every crisis, smooth every rough place, walk together through the darkest sorrow; without ever thinking of dissolving the marriage relationship. Love creates a mutual need, joy, and responsibility. A mutual sharing and caring.

have strength and courage to accept and live with that which we cannot change, knowing all the time that we have things that the mate would like to change in us. When two people are set in their ways, each refusing to change a thing in his or her life, yet refusing to accept anything less than perfection in the life of the mate, this creates an impossible condition. It should be a blending of two lives into one common goal and purpose. That is marriage.

Just plain reason would teach any couple, that if God ordained the home, Christ approved it by his presence at the marriage in Cana, and the Holy Spirit gives the formula for a God approved home, then we must look to God, through the Bible, to know how to have a proper home. The home, like the church, or the physical body, is a single unit. The man and the woman are both assigned duties for a successful home. Later there are children; the man becomes a father as well as a husband, and the woman is now not only a wife, but a mother, so new duties are assigned by God. The children now have duties and privileges in the home. God assigned duties to children. Like the physical body, the home is healthy when each fulfills the God assigned duties. Everyone doing his God assigned duties and each reaping the joys and security of a God ordained and God directed home. Unless Christ is head of the home, it can not be as God designed it. Anything less than God requires is less than man should settle for. Because it means there are less blessings to enjoy. To enjoy the blessings of a God ordained home, we must accept the obligations and designs God has given for such a home.

After Death What Then? (Cont.)

narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." We must choose our destination while we live in this earthly tabernacle. Paul said in Gal. 6:7-8, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." To live eternally with God we must turn from our sinful ways and live in obedience to Christ.

Heaven is the home for God's family. Only those who have become his children, and lived faithfully to him will be blessed to live with him for ever. The beauties and blessings of heaven are beyond the human mind to imagine, but to receive them, one must make this his choice.

"The Christian surely means to be considerate and kind in heaven. But why not here on earth and in these trying circumstances where perhaps his friends and neighbors need it most?"

"Sin is not harmful because it is forbidden, but it is forbidden because it is harmful; neither is an obligation beneficial because it is commanded, but it is commanded because it is beneficial."

"The great essentials of happiness are: something to do, something to love, and something to hope for."

"When the heart is full of love, the life will be full of service."

If two people enter into marriage with a proper understanding of marriage as God ordained it and governs it, the two are then one. Two people have become one in love, labor, and unity to establish a single unit - the home. Two people investing their love, talent, labor, joy, sorrow, and obligations into a single home. They can no longer work, live, and think in a selfish way, or think only of self, but rather as to what is best for the home. A home is first of all an investment. It is not an arrangement where one does all the investing and the other draws all the dividends. Like a savings account, the more you invest, the more you can draw out. The more you invest in the home the more love there is in the mutual account from which you can draw. On the other hand, the less love invested in the home, the less there is to draw from. That is why so many homes are bankrupt! The home is not always a fifty-fifty proposition, but must adopt a "sliding scale" of each doing what ever is necessary to keep the home investments solvent. Just remember that the home is a joint account, and it does not matter which one puts the most into the account, both enjoy the fruits of withdrawing. Some couples, like children, each wants to be sure that he, or she, does not do more than the other, and keeps account of the other's contribution to the success of the home. This will not promote a happy home. Love does not ask how little, but how much.

No person is perfect. The first thing to accept when two people begin the journey of life together, is that no person is perfect. Each will do things that the other would like to change. Some changes can be accomplished on both sides, but some will not always be pleasant. So, we work to change in the mate those things which we can change to make life more pleasant, but at the same time we must

"Christianity is not a creed but a way of life."

"Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it." Prov. 3:27

"Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart." Prov. 3:3

"The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." Prov. 2:6

Like A Bottle In The Smoke

By Harold Turner

In Psalm 119:81-83 David wrote, "My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word. Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me? For I am become like a bottle in the smoke."

This text clearly indicates that David's life was not always lying peacefully in green pastures and beside the still waters. He experienced moments of discouragement and disappointment the same as we do. In the above text David expresses that he feels like a bottle (wineskin) in the smoke, shriveled and emptied. A dark cloud of smoke had settled around his soul. A cloud that threatened to rob him of the hope of salvation. A cloud that blinded his eyes from seeing the brighter side of life. He is discouraged and depressed because he is being persecuted wrongfully. He seems to have searched through God's word for the answer to this problem, but was unable to find it. He seems to have poured out his soul in prayer, but there didn't seem to be an answer. How long? he asks, "When wilt thou comfort me?" And then, in weakness, he pleads, "Help thou me."

Most of us have experienced moments similar to what David is trying to deal with. We encounter trials that almost seem too great to overcome. We may have searched for an answer when the search seemed futile. We may have prayed repeatedly about some difficult matter, only to feel that we are not making contact with God. As our hope seems to grow dim, and our faith weak, we too find ourselves crying out, "Lord, help me."

Problems are a fact of life that must be dealt with. Some of them may be of such a nature that we cannot change them or remove them, such as: sickness, the loss of a loved one, etc. Too, some problems are only imaginary, but very real to us. Worry is often just the over working of our imagination. We spend endless hours in gloom, worrying about things that never actually happen. And, while there is nothing factual upon which to base our worries, they present a problem to us that is very real. But, whether real or imaginary, our problems must be dealt with if we are to overcome them and find happiness in life.

The problems that are a fact which cannot be changed must be dealt with as such. We cannot change the fact that a

loved one has died. We must adjust our life to the reality of this problem, rather than withdrawing from life in endless mourning. We can surrender to our grief and spend the rest of our life in sadness, or we can adjust, as difficult as it may be, and find happiness.

Many of the problems that seem to hover over our life as a cloud of smoke, are self-inflicted problems. They are things that could be changed if we would work at it. Take loneliness for an example. There are many causes for loneliness, but sometimes this is a feeling of self-pity, which we accept to live with rather than to overcome it. One of the best antidotes for loneliness is to get involved in doing things for others. To have friends we must be a friend. God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone." We live in a world of other people, people who need us as much as we need them. And even though we may seem handicapped in some ways, if we'll search, we can find ways to be useful, and ways to get involved with other people. On the other hand, if we withdraw from those about us, our life is doomed to loneliness, and thereby to unhappiness. We must learn to accept what we cannot change, and change that which we can.

Sometimes the reason we don't find the help we want from God, is that, rather than making the changes we can, we want God to change the situations about us, and leave us with no changes to make or problems to deal with. God assures us that he will help us with our problems, but one of the ways he helps us is by teaching us how to cope with and overcome problems in a way that strengthens our character. And by dealing with our problems in a practical way, we are better suited to help others in their struggles with difficult situations in life.

David found help to overcome his problem, but it wasn't in some miraculous method. He had to learn to deal with his problem in a practical way according to God's instructions, and he had to be patient in working out the solution to this problem.

Problems are not always dissolved overnight. Like David we must cling to our hope in the promises of God. Can you believe God's promise, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who

are called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28) Our faith, that though things may be difficult for the moment, they may well work to some good cause, will help strengthen us to deal with the problem rather than surrender to it. Another promise that can help us to overcome is found in I Cor. 10:13. It assures us that "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

God is on our side. He doesn't want us to go through life in a cloud of smoke. He will help us with our problems, but we must apply ourselves to the problems. He doesn't promise to take away all the problems and disappointments of life for us, but he does promise us help in dealing with and working out our problems. Life can become like a bottle in the smoke at times. We can surrender to the problems and shrivel in helpless self-pity, or we can rise above this cloud of smoke and be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. But it will require effort and patience at times to overcome. But he has promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Heb. 13:5) "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Heb. 13:6)

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"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold." Prov. 22:1

Christians By Contract

By Ted Knight

Have you ever considered what it would be like if one was compelled to sign a "contract" to live a faithful Christian life after he or she was baptized into Christ? Yes, I know that in obedience to Christ there is a vow made which is far more important than any contract drawn up by men. But, let's suppose that when one came out of the baptistery someone should appear with the contract in hand ready for the new convert to sign. What would be in the contract?

Why, we could insist that this new born babe begin immediately to be a soul winner, and even assign a certain number of calls to be made in a specified period of time. When he had grown enough we could put him under contract to be a teacher in a Bible class. There could be a part of the contract that called for a specified amount of time and effort to be spent in being a Christian parent, or a Christian son or daughter. Certainly, the contract would require that the new convert be present at all the assemblies of the church on a regular basis, and with a stipulation that special services be attended as well. The contract would require a generous portion of the individual's income to be given back to the Lord's work. We could even put clauses in the contract that would call for the new convert spending so much of his time visiting the sick and those in jail, as well as doing other benevolent deeds. We could force members to drive the buses, hand out tracts, visit the nursing homes, serve as bus captains, work with the young people, and just about every other thing that needs to be done.

What would happen if the contract was not fully kept? Why, we could just usher them right out of the Church! After all, when a contract is violated someone must pay the penalty, right?

Such a scheme would never work, and you and I both know it. The only force which motivates the Christian to faithful living is LOVE! If love for the Lord and my fellowman will not cause me to live a faithful Christian life then all the contracts on earth will not do so either. The very spirit of Christ is contrary to such an idiotic plan as that. Forced Christianity will never work unless it is forced by LOVE!

The Meanest Daddy

I've got the meanest daddy;
He just takes the cake, you see,
It seems all he thinks about
Is what is best for me.

He says, I should an example be;
Because all my friends are watching me.
Like a lady I must look,
As we are admonished in God's book.

Shorts and bathing suits are ban;
And pants that look just like a man.
Oh, the things he does demand;
I'm afraid he doesn't understand.

My daddy seems to worry so,
About my friends and where I go.
It seems to me that he should know,
The teenage life is go, go, go.

He says there are places I cannot go;
Like swimming pools and bad picture shows.
I believe he enjoys saying, No;
He is the meanest man I know.

How dull his life must be each day;
He works long hours with little play,
To give me all my wants and needs,
And to be good, with me he pleads.

Now, what I would like to know
Is why he says he loves me so.
I simply do not understand
Why he makes such strict demands.
I know he is the meanest man -
My Daddy.

By Mrs. Naomi Price

"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established." Prov. 4:26
"The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked." Prov. 10:3

"Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly." Prov. 16:22

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones." Prov. 17:22

"He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul." Prov. 15:32

Reasonable Service (Cont.)

we may "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

No doubt, many people who claim to be followers of Christ are merely nominal church members: and what little work they do could not be reasonably considered a "sacrifice". The word "sacrifice" suggests that we do something more than just what is convenient and does not deprive us of anything that we may enjoy. It means that we give up something that would be beneficial to us for something higher and more worthwhile than merely the things pertaining to this life. No doubt, many of the things we consider a sacrifice to God in our lives would not be considered so by him.

God required the best of the Jews when they sacrificed their animals. The prophet Malachi rebuked the people severely for offering blemished animals as a sacrifice to God, and said, "Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts".

The Lord has given us 168 hours a week. We may use those hours as we consider profitable, either spiritually or materially. But if we use those hours striving to accumulate material things and neglect the service of God, we will lose our souls. The average Christian devotes but a small fraction of those hours to the service of God, insofar as the assembling of ourselves together is concerned. Some may consider that by giving one hour of the 168, they are offering their bodies as a "living sacrifice". The average person receives pay for an average forty hours a week; and, yet, many spend less than one hour in worship and service to God. How, then can we think that we are giving "reasonable service" to God? Do we honestly think that such is a "living sacrifice" to God? What does God think of me? This is a serious matter which we should seriously consider. Let us try to look at ourselves as God sees us.

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