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Forget All His Benefits

By Lavern Stewart

One human weakness is to forget what another does FOR us and to remember what he does AGAINST us. And speaking of what others do for us, who could ever do more for us and deserve more thanks than God?

David tells us not to forget all that God has done for us: Psalms 103:2, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Here are some of the things that David names in this chapter that are benefits from the Lord: (1) Forgiveth all iniquities, (2) Healeth all diseases, (3) Redeemeth thy life from destruction, (4) Crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies, (5) Satisfieth thy mouth with good things so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles.

The writer also talks about the Lord being merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and will not keep his anger forever. Verse ten says, "He has not dealt with us as we deserve, but rather has forgiven our sins."

One great benefit is God's knowledge of our weaknesses, and His tender mercy in dealing with us accordingly. Notice verses 13, 14, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For He knoweth our frame: He remembereth that we are dust." Jesus is well aware of our weaknesses: John 2:24, 25, "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." Also, Mark 14:38, "Watch ye and pray; lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak." We have so many blessings from God that we take for granted.

One of the most lovely songs known to me is found on page 68 of "Sacred Selections For The Church": "Count Your Blessings". The song starts like this, "When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed, when you are discouraged, thinking all is lost, count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done." Possibly we could not count all of our blessings because we do not even realize what all of them are. But the next time you are tempted to grumble and complain about your situation in life, just sit down and count your blessings and remember all His benefits.

Seed Produces After Its Own Kind

By Harold Turner

In the beginning when God created all things, He set forth a principle for reproduction which has never, and will never change. This principle is seen in Genesis 1:11-12; 24-25: "And God said, let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was Good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after His kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good."

In the vegetable and animal kingdoms, it is universally recognized that all things reproduce only after their own kind. There are no exceptions. The herb doesn't produce seed that will bring forth an apple tree. The cow has never given birth to a horse. All things reproduce after their own species. There may be variations in the color of plants and animals, and there may be variations in sizes, but all things reproduce after their own kind.

This unchangeable principle is just as true in the spiritual kingdom as it is in the vegetable or animal kingdom. To be in the spiritual kingdom of God we must be born again. In John 3:5-8 Jesus shows this, saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Another principle that is clearly recognized is that before we can have a birth there must be a seed, and this seed must be planted into the proper receptive seed bed before it can reproduce. The seed from one species of animal cannot

be planted in the womb of another species, and produce a birth. Seed produces after its own kind. So we must have a seed to produce a birth, and this seed must be planted in the proper seed bed.

Now, Jesus said that we must be "born again," and that this birth is "of the Spirit." Possibly no passage is more confusing than this one, when viewed through the various interpretations of men. The general impression left by these interpretations is that this spiritual birth is some strange, mysterious, better felt than told experience, which takes place in some unbeknown manner. Jesus made this birth an "exception" to our entering the kingdom of God. And in John 8:32 He emphasizes, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." A person can KNOW when he is born again, and he can KNOW exactly how this birth takes place!

As we've already seen, to have a birth we must have a seed. It doesn't make any difference how clean, prepared, and fertile the soil may be, unless we have a seed to plant within it, there can be nothing produced. To be born of the Spirit, the seed of the Spirit must be sown. In Luke 8:5-8 Jesus spoke a parable to illustrate this truth. He pictured here a sower sowing seed. Some of the seed fell by the way side, some upon a rock, some among thorns, and some on good ground. Had Jesus not explained this parable, we very likely wouldn't have the vaguest idea what He was trying to teach. But He explained this, and as verse 10 indicates, made known "the mysteries of the kingdom of God." He showed that the various types of places where the seed was sown represented the various conditions of the human heart, and in verse 11 He stated: "The seed is the word of God." The word of God is the seed of the kingdom of God. And in 1 Peter 1:23, Peter said, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Now, Jesus said that we "must be born again." To have a birth we must have a seed. And the seed is the word of God, by which we are born again. The word of

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GOSPEL NEWS**

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Cleansing The Temple

By Ordell Heavin

In Mark 11 we find Jesus and His disciples coming to Jerusalem and entering the temple. What He saw there stirred Him to a reaction that many today would consider too radical, extreme, or even violent. He saw those who were buying and selling doves, and possibly other merchandise, along with the money changers. Jesus immediately took action. He cast out those who sold and bought in the temple, and over threw the table of the moneychangers, and the seats of those who sold doves, and He would suffer that no man should carry any vessel through the temple. His explanation for this behavior was: "Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves."

There were those who objected to the Lord's insistence that the temple be maintained for holy purposes, and registered their objections most forcefully. The scribes and chief priests heard of this action, and "sought how they might destroy Him." It wasn't organized crime of the state, nor was it the atheistic element of the community, who would have destroyed the Lord, but the religious leaders. And for what? Among other things, for cleansing the temple.

That temple no longer stands, as foretold by the Lord in Matt. 24, but there is another of far greater importance. There are numerous scriptures showing that Christians now compose the temple of God. When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth he said, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" (1 Cor. 3:16) And when he wrote the church at Ephesus, he said, "You are an holy temple in the Lord; for an habitation of God." (Eph. 2:19-22)

The temple that Jesus cleansed in Mark 11, was to be a holy place, and a place of prayer and worship to God. Likewise, the church-temple, has certain holy purposes ascribed to it. In Eph. 5:25-27 Paul wrote, "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." He also showed in Eph. 3:10 that it is through the church that the "manifold wisdom of God" is to be known. And in Eph. 3:21 he showed that God is to be glorified in the church throughout all ages.

Corrupt men turned the first temple into a den of thieves. They discarded God's purpose for the temple for their own profit. And the same thing can

happen to the second temple (the church) today. In 1 Cor. 3:17 Paul said, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." But God warned that men would likewise ignore this warning, and His purpose for the church. In Acts 20:29-30, Paul said, "For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock, also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." The apostle Peter also warned, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." (2 Peter 2:1) In Jude 4, Jude said, "There are certain men brought in unawares, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

If Jesus visited His temple in our community today, would He need to do some casting out? Of course, He isn't going to pay us that type of visit, but He has left instructions in His word to keep His temple holy and free from the false doctrines of men. In Rom. 16:17 He leaves us this warning: "Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." And in 1 Cor. 5:11, 13, "If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, covetous, idolater, railer, drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not eat - therefore put away from yourselves that wicked person." And in 2 Thess. 3:6, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which He received of us."

The first temple had its merchants and moneychangers who commercialized the sacred house of prayer. And the church-temple likewise has those who are willing to divide and offend contrary to the apostles' doctrine. There are still those who choose to walk disorderly and contrary to the traditions delivered by the apostles, and there are those who still live immoral, ungodly lives. Jesus cleansed the first temple, driving out those who defiled God's holy purpose, and He has given us instructions to keep His church-temple holy, and free from those who would defile God's purpose for it.

"About the time one learns to make the most of life, most of it is gone."

Communal Living In The Early Church

By Clovis Ragsdale

In the second chapter of Acts we learn something of how the first Christian converts lived in the weeks and months following the beginning of the church. In verses 45 through 47 the Bible tells us that "They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: any many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."

Some have concluded that this action by the early church is to be an example followed by the church of all ages. However, a closer look at this situation will reveal why it was necessary for some of the new converts to sell their possessions and give them to the apostles to be distributed to other new converts who were in need.

Acts 2:9-11 tells us that many nations were represented in the audience of those gathered in Jerusalem for this Pentecost. Of the three thousand converted on the first day alone, many were no doubt from distant lands described in these verses. They remained in Jerusalem for some time afterward rejoicing in their new found faith, and to be edified and strengthened. Naturally, they would run out of provisions. The local converts, from the goodness of their hearts, not by command, sold their possessions so all could eat and live during this great event. In the fifth chapter of Acts this practice was still going on. Ananias and his wife sold some land and gave part of it for this work. However, these picture a corrupt attitude toward this wonderful work. They gave only a part while pretending to give all, and Peter said that in so doing
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Are You Ashamed?

By Bob Clardy

Have you ever been in a position where you were sort of ashamed for someone to know that you were a Christian? Many Christians face this dilemma in their life. They feel uneasy or embarrassed if they are confronted with questions such as: "What does Christ mean to you?" or "Why are you a member of the church of Christ?"

Are you the kind of Christian that is anxiously awaiting opportunities to tell others about what and why you believe, or are you the type that "just doesn't push his religion on others?" Too many take the latter view that if they say anything about religion, unless being specifically asked, that they are being "too pushy." I know that you can go to the extreme; but I don't know too many this way, do you?

It appears to me that too many hide behind their excuses when the truth of the matter is that they are too weak, embarrassed, and ashamed to openly speak about that which they profess in the church building!

Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation." (Rom. 1:16) Can you imagine Paul going into Corinth and saying, "Well, I'll just go ahead and make my tents; but I won't say anything about my religion unless I am asked because I certainly don't want to push my religion on anybody?" Paul did not hide behind excuses, and neither should we! It has not been unknown for husbands and wives to never once talk with their mates about becoming a Christian. Why? Surely, if there is anyone you would want to be in heaven with you, it would be your mate.

If more of us would resolve to make Paul's statement in Romans 1:16 our very own, there would probably be a drastic reaction wherever we go. Because there is explosive power in the human vessel unashamed of telling others about the gospel of Christ.

"You can learn many things from children, how much patience you have, for instance."

"Pay no attention to what the critics say; there has never been set up a statue in honor of a critic."

As The World Turns

By Larry Price

As the world turns, so do many members of the church. This summer it has been difficult to tell the difference between some "Christians" and the world. Certainly as far as dress is concerned, the collective image presented by the church has to take a back seat. I believe I have seen more skin and less clothes on "Christians" than ever before.

As the world becomes more wicked, it is easy for many to rationalize and make excuses for following close behind. A gradual erosion of morality is always accepted easier than an abrupt change. One excuse often heard is "No one will notice me since others are wearing clothes more revealing than mine." So off they go to the beach or the pool to be another part of the sea of flesh, satisfied that God is surely pleased with them. They evidently feel that as long as they are a little more modest than the worst of the world, then all is okay. I wonder if Adam and Eve could have used that excuse? Who was there in the garden to notice them in their aprons of fig leaves? God was, and He was not satisfied! If God's "Voice came walking" along the beaches and pools today as it did through the garden (Gen. 3:8), I wonder how many "Christians" would hide as did Adam and Eve? How many would have as much as an apron of fig leaves on?

The problem is still the same, that of being conformed to the world. Let the fashion designer come out with a new way to reveal the body, instead of "becoming godliness" (1 Tim. 2:10), and the world jumps on the fashion wagon. Unfortunately the church is often not far behind. The daughter comes home from school and says, "I need the latest style because everyone is wearing it, and I don't want to look out of place." Instead of the Christian mother teaching her that the important thing is to please the Lord with obvious modesty, all too often, she will see that the daughter is "up to date". A golden opportunity to teach non-conformity to the world is lost. Instead an attitude is taught that will weaken the daughter's Christian life and possibly cost her her soul.

Are we drifting with the world? I believe we are. With the constant encouragement to dress "sexy" and our lack of definitive teaching what else can we expect? In the 1963 lectureships at ACC, Wyatt Sawyer spoke out against mixed swimming, and even against scanty dress in the physical education classes. In the late 50's and 60's at youth meetings

many spoke out against mixed swimming and the wearing of shorts. I can remember Paul Southern's comments in 1962 against women wearing figure revealing pants. Not many years ago Jimmy Allen delivered lectures titled, "Immorality USA" where he spoke out plainly on immodesty. If these things were sins then, they are now! Who is speaking out today?

The need is not for a battle with the world, but rather a battle with worldliness within the church. It is difficult to teach our youth against mixed swimming when some of our Christian Colleges advertise public swim competition as a drawing card to enroll new students. It is difficult to teach modesty when our youth directors take the youth to the lake for mixed swimming and water skiing. It is difficult to teach modesty when our elders brag on their daughter's chorus girl performance on the football field. It is difficult to teach unspottedness from the world when our teachers wear scanty clothing in public. It is difficult to teach Christian living when many of our young women are more interested in their sun tan than their examples. No wonder it is reported that we are losing more than half of our young people. Oh, the faithful are still around, but they seem harder to find each year.

What can be done? As in the case of drifting down the river toward the falls, we need to get out the paddles and use them. We need our religious publications to speak out. We need youth meetings where obvious modesty and abstention from worldliness are taught. We need preachers who will speak out in a way that convicts. We need elders who insist that our youth, in their activities, represent the church in a Christian way. Simply stated, we need people determined to live FOR Christ.

"Growing up is easier for children of parents who already have done it."

"A different world cannot be built by indifferent people."

"A critic is a legless man who teaches running."

"The better part of every man's education is that which he gives himself."

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Communal Living (Cont.)

they had lied to the Holy Spirit. The sin was in the lie. Peter explained that Ananias could do whatever he wanted with the possession, and of its value even after he sold it. But they had tried to deceive the people into believing they had given the full price of the possession, and they paid for this mistake with their life.

From this early custom of eating together, grew the love feasts. This term applied to a common meal eaten by the early Christians upon the first day of the week when they assembled for worship. Each brought their food and they all ate together. It's possible that the poor of the community were invited to share in this meal.

In the eleventh chapter of First Corinthians, Paul advises these to eat their meals at home because some disorder had resulted in the manner which the eating was being carried on. Does this apply to the present day practice of "dinner on the ground?" or the fellowship meals in the church building basements and etc.? No, not if we carry on in a decent and orderly manner. However, if one's conscience forbids him eating in a church building, then he shouldn't. But he would not have the right to bind his opinion about this matter on everyone else. Love and consideration should be exercised by all.

The communal living of the early church is a beautiful example of the love and concern that the early followers of Christ had for one another. And while the circumstances today may be different, we are to have the same type of love and concern for those in need. "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." (1 Pet. 1:22) "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3:17-18)

Seed Produces After Its (Cont.)

God is the seed of the Spirit, and, as we saw in Luke 8:11-15, the soil into which this seed must be sown to produce the new birth is the heart of man.

Now, notice how and when this birth takes place. Jesus commissioned the apostles to go "Into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15) He also assured them, "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." What they spoke was in reality the message of the Spirit, the seed to produce the new birth. In Acts 2:4 the apostles were all filled with the Holy Spirit, "and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The Spirit, speaking through the apostles, began to set forth undeniable evidences of the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. When the people heard these evidences, they saw themselves guilty of sin, and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do." They have now come to the point of decision. The seed of the Spirit has been sown, they can receive it and be born again, or reject it. The Spirit, speaking through Peter, said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Then in verses 40-41 the Spirit urges them to save themselves, and "They that gladly received his word were baptized." They received the word, the seed of the Spirit, and were baptized, thereby being "born of water and of the Spirit." (John 3:5)

There is nothing confusing or mysterious about the new birth, when viewed in light of the Bible. The confusion is a result of men trying to interpret this in light of their own ideas. Throughout the book of Acts every example of conversion follows this simple pattern: the word was preached, and those who believed it were baptized, being born of water and of the Spirit. This is the pattern that Jesus gave in the great commission of Mark 16:15-16. He instructed the apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, and then said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Now, if we want to be the same thing that those people were, then, then won't we have to do the same thing they did? Surely it takes the same thing today to bring about the new birth as it did then. Seed will always produce after its own kind. The gospel of Jesus Christ will produce only a Christian, nothing more, nothing less.

But, someone may ask, How does the gospel produce so many different kinds of Christians? It doesn't! It's true that we have hundreds of different kinds of religions, all claiming to be Christian, but

these differences were not a result of the Bible. They came about after the doctrines of men. If you want a Baptist then you have to preach Baptist doctrine. If you want a Methodist, you have to preach Methodist doctrine. And the same is true of whatever you want to produce, whether Lutheran, Catholic, Presbyterian, Mormon, and etc. You can't produce a Methodist from Baptist doctrine, neither can you produce a Baptist from Mormon doctrine. Seed will always produce after its own kind. If we want to be a member of the church we read about in the Bible then we must go back to the Bible and do exactly what they did, nothing more or less. To stress this point further, notice what the Spirit instructs in 2 John 9-11, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

God's word is the seed by which we can be born again; it is the key to spiritual freedom (John 8:32), and it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that will believe it (Rom. 1:16). It is designed as a sufficient doctrine to reprove, correct, and instruct us in our journey here on earth (2 Tim. 2:16-17). By following it, we will be just what God wants us to be. It is perfect, therefore, no man can improve upon it. And it closes with the warning not to add to, or take from its teaching.

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