

A BAD BARGAIN

A Sunday school teacher asked her class if they could give Bible examples of anyone making a bad bargain. The first said, "Esau made a bad bargain when he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage". Another said, "Judas made a bad bargain when he sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver". A third said, "Ananias and Sapphira made a bad bargain when they lied about the price of their land". A fourth said, "Jesus said it is a bad bargain when a man gains the whole world and loses his own soul".

We might add another to the above list by observing that it is a bad bargain for you and me to trade our hope of heaven for the pleasures, riches, power and glory of this world. Jesus was shown all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time and told he could have all these if he bowed down to Satan. Jesus knew that would be a bad bargain.

What kinds of bargains do we make? Do we trade the worship time for a few hours of sleep? Do we trade Christian service for idle pleasures? Let us not trade Heaven for anything!

John Wright

A CONGREGATION OF ADDICTS

There was a family in Corinth that is mentioned in First Corinthians that is of particular note. It is the household of Stephanas. Paul taught and baptized this great family. What a blessing they became! They were wonderful helpers to the apostle. Stephanas supplied a service when it was needed most. (1 Corinthians 1:16; 16:17)

This man and his family were so zealous for the Lord and so close to the Master that it was said of them that they addicted themselves to the ministry (1 Corinthians 16:15). Addicted? What a wonderful term to describe their love and service to Christ.

As I considered this statement, I thought about the great work being done by Christians who are addicted to the work of the church. Let us get into the work of the church where we are with all our hearts, so that folks, seeing our good works, can say that we are a congregation of addicts addicted to the Word and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. **John Wright**

A DIFFICULT LIFE?

Life seems hard at times. Things don't seem to go as we want. Problems arise that become mountains looming before us. At such a time, we know God is with us to strengthen and support us. Talking to Him helps us carry our burdens.

John the baptizer, from his youth, lived a hard life. When he became an adult, he went to live in the wilderness of Judaea, an inhospitable terrain inhabited by wild beasts. His clothing was made from animal skins, and his food was locusts and honey gathered in the wild (Matthew 3:4).

The Word of the Lord came to him there; not telling him of a softer life ahead, but telling him of a great work that had been prophesied by Isaiah (40:3), Malachi (4:5-6) and others. The work was to be very demanding, going against the religious thinking of the day. He would have enemies and would finally be killed for his message (Matthew 14:10).

Knowing how hard his life would be, he put his whole heart and strength into the task. His was a work nobody else could do. Your work and mine is a work nobody else can do – that of trying to convert our family members and friends. **John Wright**

Articles courtesy of John Wright.

Woodbine Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee

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A MORE POWERFUL ENEMY

The world at large has been opposed to God's will since creation. In the days of the patriarchs people rebelled against God. In the Mosaic age, folk fought against God's law. When Christ walked the earth, most people around Him were His enemies.

Today, in the age of the Lord's church, the same rule applies, except to a greater degree. The world is a greater enemy of the child of God than ever before. It has power over Christians because of its favors, riches, honors, rewards and stronger methods of tempting than ever before.

It is a more dangerous enemy because it has lost its appearance of being an enemy, posing as an angel of light. Therefore, people do not fear it, and instead give themselves over to be ruled by it. The power wielded by Satan in today's world has greater impact than the fire and fury of persecutions in New Testament days. Peter, in 1 Peter 5:8 describes the dilemma as Satan being a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Temptation is not getting less. Wickedness is not getting less, but is growing and getting more powerful every day. **John Wright**

A SOFT ANSWER

The two men finally met. Each had nurtured grudges against the other for years because of real and imagined wrongs done by each. It had gotten so bad that each had sworn to take the other's life. Long distances had been traveled for this encounter to happen. They had not seen each other for 25 years. Both men had matured and grown wiser in many ways. They had seen good times and tragedy. Their lives had been changed in ways that they didn't realize. Neither knew what to expect; hoping for the best, and expecting the worst. Upon seeing each other, they both were surprised at finding a decent-looking, aging man instead of the terrible person of their imaginations. The first spoke: "At last we meet".

After some hesitation, the other replied, "Yes, and it's good to see you." He was surprised at his words. The other also expressed shock. No tirade was given, no harsh words exchanged, only a soft answer. Without any further conversation, they advanced, shook hands, and went their way. Just one more proof that the wisdom of God's Word really works. (Proverbs 15:1)

John Wright

A THIEF NO MORE

He had been in trouble of some kind since he was ten years of age. It started out as he stole watermelons from a neighbor's yard. It then went to going into people's houses and taking anything he wanted. He had been sent to juvenile lock-up facilities many times. As he got older, his crimes continued, sending him to jail several times.

Now, he was on parole from the state prison, having been released the day before. He broke into an antique book store and made off with some rare, valuable old volumes. He took them to the room he had rented. He opened the bag and examined his loot. One book was an old Bible. He remembered his grandmother reading from the Bible. He opened it, wondering what it contained.

He was still reading when daylight came. He continued most of the day. By evening, he realized his life had been wasted. He called a preacher, learned the way of salvation, and obeyed the gospel. He returned the books to the store and decided he would live for Christ from then on.

John Wright

A TIME TO EVERY PURPOSE

Solomon's wonderful wisdom is brought to us powerfully in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 where he mentions many categories of life: "A time to be born and a time to die..."

There are events in our lives that we eagerly anticipate, while other events we dread, even fear. It is God's purpose that we build and break down, plant and pluck up what we planted.

When we read of all these different events that are necessary, we can thank God that He has made such wonderful provisions for our work, lives and well-being.

As we age, we become more and more thankful that God has made provision for us to pass from this life into an eternal home. We are thankful that disease, suffering, disappointments, tears, pain and all the rest will pass away (Revelation 21:4).

As we ponder this, we realize that there is a time to obey God, a time to live for Him, a time to forgive others, a time to heal from hurts and renew our spirits, and a time to urge our friends and family to prepare for this eventual death. **John Wright**

A TRAGIC BARGAIN

A granddaughter of Aaron Burr became a Christian. She said to her grandfather, "I wish you were a Christian, too." The old man said, "When I was young, I went to an evangelistic meeting and felt the need of God's forgiveness, and knew I should give my heart to Him, but I didn't. I walked out under the stars, looked into the heavens and said, "God, if You don't bother me anymore, I'll never bother you." Then looking at the girl he said, "God has kept His part of the bargain. He has never bothered me. Now it is too late for me to bother Him."

This misspent life, filled with treachery and treason against the United States, was made still more tragic by going into eternity without God.

We may think that was a silly bargain to make, but we seem to gamble our salvation by either refusing to serve Christ, or letting sinful practices entangle us. Certainly, God will not try to force anyone to live right, but His great love reminds us that He is not willing that any be lost (2 Peter 3:9). **John Wright**

A WORD FITLY SPOKEN

We are all familiar with the beautiful analogy in Proverbs 25:11. Here, the "apples of gold in pictures of silver" are the right words spoken at the right time and in the right way.

Maybe a situation calls for words of teaching. Just the right words can bring someone to obedience. Maybe the situation demands words of encouragement. Words fitly spoken can cheer a depressed person, or a sick brother or sister.

Some of us are so wrapped up in our own situations that we cannot see that others need those precious words from us that would mean the world to them at that moment.

Perhaps a call to a shut-in would bring joy to their heart. Perhaps a visit to an erring Christian would bring about their restoration. Perhaps a word to a faithful worker in the church would elevate them to greater heights of service. We all have this power to say that "fitly spoken word". **John Wright**

ABIGAIL, WISE WOMAN

Abigail, wife of Nabal, was a "woman of good understanding". Her major problem was, she was married to a peevish, vulgar, wicked man. Seemingly trapped in this situation, she was making the best of her circumstances, difficult though they were.

King David was in Carmel, where Nabal kept his sheep. While there, David saw to the protection of Nabal's servants and sheep. When David needed provisions, he sent men to Nabal asking for his help. That evil man refused his request, displaying a lack of gratefulness for the help David had given his men.

Abigail was told that David would surely avenge this action. Knowing it would mean slaughtering all his household, she loaded donkeys with food, and, with her servants, met David, thus averting disaster. She didn't tell her husband what she had done until he had begun to sober up from a drunken binge. He became as stone, was smitten of God, and died. Abigail stands out as an example of one who follows God's pattern of seeking a wise, peaceful solution to major problems. May God help us to follow this example. **John Wright**

ABOUT FORGIVING

There are times when someone really hurts another with their words, actions or attitude. If you happen to be the victim, the words of Jesus in Luke 17:3-4 have a special meaning. The subject is forgiving, no matter how many times one does you wrong.

This is one of the harder commands of our Lord. Nothing is easy about constantly forgiving one who continues to do you wrong.

When Jesus told the apostles this was their task, they responded in verse 5, "Lord, increase our faith."

This seems to be the key: to have enough faith to be able to forgive a constant offender. Another statement of Jesus must be considered in this matter. In Matthew 5:44 Jesus said, "...pray for them which despitefully use you..."

We cannot and must not carry grudges against those who do us wrong. If we do, we will be lost just as surely as they. **John Wright**

ADVANTAGES OF DYING

Following are Biblical reasons not to fear death:

- (1) Death is greatly desired over life in this world. Numbers 23:10
- (2) The Lord is with us all the way. Psalm 23:4
- (3) Leaving this life is precious to God. Psalm 116:15
- (4) There is hope in death for the Christian. Proverbs 14:32
- (5) The righteous triumph in death. Luke 16:22
- (6) There is a divine element in death. Romans 14:8
- (7) Dying is great gain to the child of God. Philippians 1:21
- (8) Our faith gives us a glimpse of the after-life. Hebrews 11:13
- (9) Blessings are pronounced on the dead in Christ. Revelation 14:13

PREPARING FOR DEATH IS THE SAME AS PREPARING FOR LIFE!

- (1) We must sacrifice our wants for Christ. John 12:25
- (2) We need to know God and His Son Jesus Christ. John 17:3
- (3) Sowing the word is necessary. Galatians 6:8
- (4) Converting souls (reaping) is necessary. John 4:35-36
- (5) We must endure to the end. Matthew 10:22
- (6) Faith and confession are necessary. Romans 10:9-10
- (7) Cleansing is part of preparation. Revelation 7:14; Acts 22:16
- (8) Obedience is required. Revelation 22:16 **John Wright**

ADVICE FOLLOWED

There was a fever of excitement. A gospel meeting was going on in Princeton, New Jersey. A first-year student became interested in becoming a Christian. The minister had presented powerful, moving lessons. Others were responding to the invitation nightly. This young man wanted to be sure before obeying Christ, so he went to the college president and said, "Mister President, I have decided to consider becoming a Christian. What would you do?"

The old president gave this advice. "If I were you, I would wait until the excitement of the revival was over, then think about it very carefully." The young man followed his advice. This young man became famous in American history. His name was Aaron Burr. His family has stated that he died never again expressing a desire to obey the gospel. The advice given him by the college president was exactly what Satan inspired him to give.

This happens every day. Someone states a desire to obey the gospel, and there is always someone saying, "You better think about it awhile. You can do it later." Satan scores again!

John Wright

ALWAYS RIGHT

His grandfather was always right. At least, that is what the old man claimed. When the lad asked a question on any subject, the aged one winked and gave him an answer that he claimed was never wrong.

As the boy grew, and his visits to grandpa became less frequent, he began to doubt the universal knowledge and wisdom the old man claimed to have. Especially the night the boy obeyed the gospel. Grandpa had stayed home, saying he didn't need to hear any preacher. He claimed to know more about the Bible than anyone around. This statement really puzzled the young man. If he knew what to do to be saved, why didn't he do it?

Many months passed before the boy visited again. This time, grandpa was not there. He had died. His grandmother handed him a note from grandpa. "My dear boy, I claimed to know so much, but when you obeyed the gospel, I realized that was one area in which I was ignorant. I studied my Bible, and last year, I, too, obeyed the gospel." The lad looked at grandma with tears in his eyes and said, "Maybe I knew a little, too." **John Wright**

AM I COMMITTED?

Some folks dabble a little in religion. One may attend an occasional worship period, but sit on the back seat, as if afraid of getting too much religion. Another may come often to worship, but refuse to speak of Christ and His church to anyone during his day, saying, "It's bad for business." Still another may justify his lack of service by contributing money.

Jesus repeatedly told His followers that He wanted total commitment. He made quite clear His point that anything less than our best is not good enough.

A fable tells of a hog and a hen passing the meeting house where the sermon topic could be read, "How can we help the poor?" The hen said, "We could give them a ham and egg breakfast." The hog objected by saying, "To you it would be only a contribution, but to me it would mean total commitment."

Let us ask ourselves what we can do in the work of the church that we are not now doing. Maybe we need to do more than make a contribution. Maybe we need total commitment.

John Wright

AN IMPORTANT MAN

In 1927, in West Africa, a man named Asabi was sick with yellow fever. He gave a sample of his blood for the purpose of making a vaccine. After much work, testing, and failing, the vaccine was successful. Even to this day, all yellow fever vaccines are part of that original strain taken from that humble man. The blood of that one man served the whole human race.

To a much greater degree, the blood of a man who lived and died over 2000 years ago has served, indeed saved, the whole human race from Adam to the end of time. That man is our Lord Jesus Christ. His blood, which cleansed sins in the first century, is still cleansing today. "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."(1 John 1:7) We are redeemed by this blood (1 Peter 1:18-19). We are justified by His blood (Romans 5:9). We are washed and made white in His blood (Revelation 7:14).

I am thankful that the blood of Asabi prevented yellow fever. I am more thankful that the blood of Christ saves us. **John Wright**

ARE THERE ACCEPTABLE LIES?

Some are confused about the subject of telling lies. Some seem to feel that a lie is acceptable if it serves a good purpose. A doctor could tell his patient that all was well with him to save him the anguish of knowing the truth. Reporters, ambassadors, and police could lie about things they feel should not reach the public. Are these things acceptable to God?

Rahab the harlot lied about hiding the spies sent to Jericho and thereby saved their lives. Was this not justified? An old prophet lied to the young prophet in 1 Kings 13. What about this? Paul tells us to "Put away lying" in Ephesians 4:25. Satan's lies are evident in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11 and cause people to be lost. Jesus called Satan the "father of lies" in John 8:44. John says that "No lie is of the truth" (1 John 2:21). Revelation 21:8, 27 says there are no liars in heaven. So, what does it all mean?

No lie is acceptable to God. Rahab had an imperfect faith in God, making her see lying as the only way to help the spies. Doctors, politicians, reporters and others must find a way to present their facts without lying. No, there are no "white lies". Sin in any form is not acceptable.

John Wright

ARE WE LIKE MULES?

In London, Lord Shaftesbury was told that if his mules worked six days per week, resting on Sunday, they could travel thirty miles per day, while mules that worked seven days per week could travel only fifteen miles per day, thereby losing seventy-five miles per week. By taking Sunday off, they gained 3,900 miles per year.

A nearby coalmine used mules in the underground shafts. They learned that by bringing them up into the light every Sunday, they kept them from going blind.

In thinking about this, can we make application to ourselves today? By taking the Lord's day from our labor, and devoting it to worship, meditation and service, we make much more headway than by not refreshing ourselves with weekly worship. Also, regarding the animals in the mines, we must constantly come back to the light of God's Word to keep ourselves from becoming spiritually blind. Jesus said in Matthew 6:23, "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness..." Let us take lessons from mules by worshipping regularly.

John Wright

AT EASE

I love the account of Job. This great man is known for his godliness and patience. But it was not always so. Job was like many of us in this generation; caught up in our daily lives and our possessions. Job was one of the richest men of his day, having apparently been blessed abundantly by God. All was going well with him, so why should he worry about anything?

What Job didn't know was that a conversation was going on between God and Satan concerning him. God was about to allow Satan to afflict Job very strenuously. Chapter one describes how, in one day, everything was taken away from this man. Chapter two relates how Satan afflicted his body with sores from head to foot. In chapter 16, Job defines his suffering thus: "I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces..." He was at ease enjoying his wealth and position in life, not thinking that God could take it all away in a day. Amos 6:1 says "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria..." Let us not take God's wonderful blessings for granted, but give Him thanks and praise for all He has let us have.

John Wright

BE NOT TERRIFIED

America has been attacked by religious zealots bent on destroying anyone who does not agree with them. What can be said about this horrible event? What is the Christian's attitude to be? What are we to think?

One of the prophesies of Jesus, recorded in Luke 21, warns them, and us, about horrific times. "When ye hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified, for these things must first come to pass..." 1 Thessalonians 5:3 tells of folks who were not vigilant. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them..."

As the sudden attacks upon New York and Washington D.C. attest, we know not the day nor the hour when our lives will abruptly end. This fact makes us more sober, more watchful, and wiser. We, however, must not be terrified. We cannot allow our fear of the perpetrators to control us.

Jesus teaches us about fear. Matthew 10:28 says "Fear not them which kill the body: but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Don't be terrified. Fear and trust God. **John Wright**

BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN

In the record left by Daniel, Chapter 1, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, overcame the Israelites and took prisoners. Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. The king had asked for children with no blemishes, good looking, wise, and cunning in knowledge and understanding. These four had the qualifications. They even had more. They had something about which the king knew nothing: a reverence for Jehovah.

With Daniel as spokesman, they asked not to be forced to eat the rich foods and drink the wine of the king. Rather, they asked to be fed herbs, thereby not defiling themselves.

We refer to them as beautiful because they had the burning desire to please God. Thankfully, we have beautiful people in the church--people we can admire, people we can go to for encouragement; people who have the same desire to please God. These four men overcame the fiery furnace, interpreted the king's dream, and, in short, were a real credit to their God. Let us try our best to be a credit to Christ and His church. **John Wright**

BEAUTIFUL THINGS

Some things are beautiful to see
Like faith and hope and charity
Where people's faith shows in their deeds
As God in Heaven supplies their needs.

Where hope is evident in each face
And loving deeds are commonplace
Where charity is a way to live
And folks are willing to forgive.

I pray that God will always smile
On this good church, and all the while
May we live for Him and always thrill
At the chances we have to do His will.

John Wright

BEING THANKFUL

A preacher once retired from full-time pulpit work because of a very painful malady. As he sat nursing his pain, he thought about the prayer of a blind man: "Lord, I have never thanked you for my 'thorn'. I have thanked you for the roses, but never for the thorn. Help me realize the value of the thorn. Help me realize the glory of the cross; the value of climbing to you through pain."

Feeling ashamed, the preacher prayed, "Lord forgive me for my selfishness. Thank you that my condition is not worse. Make me an instrument of help and comfort to those who are in a far worse condition."

That day, that prayer changed his life. He could now see clearly the impact of 1 Thessalonians 5:18. "In everything give thanks..."

Did you ever thank God for a storm? For a forest fire? Good comes out of every situation of life. Look for the good instead of mourning over what appears to be bad. "All things work together for good to them that love God..." Romans 8:28 **John Wright**

BEING THANKFUL

One lesson that hits home repeatedly is brought to us in a very forceful way in 1 Thessalonians 5:18: "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Whatever happens in our lives, we can find reason to be thankful to God.

An English minister had spoken to a congregation in Boston, and upon leaving the building he asked a man directions to his hotel. The man replied, "Why, you are the minister I just heard. I know your voice. I am blind, but I can show you the way." The minister protested, but the man begged him to let him help. "I live alone. I can find my way alone in the streets without help. I thank God for my blindness, because it gives me so much time for quiet meditation. There will be time enough in heaven for me to see everything."

That minister walked away a wiser man, thankful for the lesson taught by the loving, Christian man he had just met. **John Wright**

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BELIEVING WHEN BELIEVING IS HARD

We can sit among loving Christians in worship and say to ourselves, "I believe in God!" We can be enjoying a meal with the family and express our belief in God. We can be hoeing the garden, cleaning house, watching the sunset, watching the children at play and a thousand other things and reaffirm our strong belief in God.

What about when nothing is going right? What about when a family member has a terminal illness? What about when we have been robbed, or our house burned by an arsonist? What if one of our children was molested? What if suddenly we found we have no money and no income? Can we heartily say, "I believe in God"?

The point is, when all's well, we can see God by the eye of faith; but when nothing seems right, we lose sight of God. After World War II, in a cellar in Cologne, Germany, were found these words on a wall: "I believe in the sun, even when it's not shining. I believe in love, even when I feel it not. I believe in God, even when He is silent." **John Wright**

BLESSED ARE THE POOR

Much is said in both the Old and New Testaments about the poor of the lands of the Bible. God seemed to have a special love for the poor. Christ said on occasion that He preached the gospel to the poor. In the beatitudes, Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in heart, for they shall see God". Abraham Lincoln once said that God must love the poor people because He made so many of them.

We can own much of the world's goods and still be poor in heart. Meekness, liberality, generosity, lowly service and love for God and our fellow men describe one who is poor in heart.

When a child of God becomes wealthy, the easy way is to hang on to every cent, ignoring the commands of God to give, and ignoring the dire need of those around him.

When Jesus was walking the earth, he owned nothing. When He died, He had nothing to will to others; yet, He was the richest one who ever lived. He was rich in love and works for God. We seem to work for God better if we are poor. The rich people seldom are saved. Money becomes a curse rather than a blessing. **John Wright**

BLESSING AND CURSING

Mount Gerizim is luxuriant in grasses and trees. Flocks and herds can feed there. The lower slopes have barley and wheat crops thriving. It is called the mount of blessing.

Opposite is Mount Ebal. The only signs of life here are thistle and brier and an occasional jackal loping along looking for vermin. It is called the mount of cursing.

From these mountains the Law was read. Blessings were pronounced from Gerizim, and curses pronounced from Ebal.

Thinking on this, we are reminded of Paul's words in Romans 11:22 "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God..." The gospel message is a two-edged sword. Blessings on one side and warnings of eternal destruction on the other. For example: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). Also: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life..." (Romans 6:23). Thanks be to God for revealing to us both his goodness and his severity. It helps us prepare for eternity.

John Wright

BRING THEM TO JESUS

After studying the New Testament for a number of years, a man found that forty people who had the same disease were healed by Jesus. Of this number, thirty-four were taken to Him by friends, or He was taken to them. Only six of that number found their way to Jesus without assistance.

Consider the number today who have been suffering spiritual sickness, and have come to Jesus in obedience. How many were brought by families or friends? How many were invited by folks they met during a normal day's activities? How many found their way to the truth without assistance?

Statistics show that less than 2% of members of the Church came on their own. The other 98+% were invited and encouraged to attend.

With this realization, look for opportunities to invite everyone you contact to worship, encouraging them to learn God's will and become Christians. Only in this way will we fulfill our part of the great commission to take the gospel to the world. **John Wright**

BUT IT'S NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE

There are times when the elders of the church consider a course of change that they deem good for the church. Maybe it is something of a new approach, a different way of enhancing the growth of the Lord's church.

Change is always uncomfortable, so some of us look for ways to avoid changes. Many changes in the Lord's church today are not scriptural. Many are not expedient. Some, however, are good and advisable.

We may not understand the thinking or wisdom of decisions made by the elders, but if we cannot find anything unscriptural in their plans, it is our responsibility to support and encourage them in the work.

One thing about the discomfort of change is that it doesn't last long. God has given us the ability to adapt to changing conditions, especially when they are something we have not experienced before.

Before shrinking back, or criticizing the efforts to help the church grow in our community, let us get on our knees and pray to God to help us understand and accept that which will draw more souls to Christ. **John Wright**

CAN WE DO NO MORE?

In 1870 a church official made this statement: "The millennium is at hand. Man has invented everything that can be invented. He has done all he can do." That man was Milton Wright, the father of Wilber and Orville, inventors of the airplane.

How shortsighted we can become! We look at what we are doing as individual Christians and as a church and might think that nothing more can be done. Can we limit the work of Almighty God with our lack of imagination and industry?

Jesus said, "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work." (John 9:4)

Look at what is being done by the church worldwide and locally. Consider it well! Then try to find better ways of teaching, converting, serving the community, and performing other phases of the work, and see if you can't come up with even more ideas of serving. **John Wright**

CHURCH OF BONES

A preacher once categorized his congregation into five types of bones: (1) Wishbones - folks wishing for better things, but not willing to work for them. (2) Jawbones. – gossiping kind that put others in turmoil. (3) Funny bones - touchy people who wear their feelings on their sleeves. (4) Drybones – true to faith but dead as fossils. (5) Backbones - those who are the spiritual support of the church and keep the body standing.

It's fine to wish for better things, but let's make an effort to bring them about by every means at our disposal.

There are some who need special help and attention to keep them faithful and active. By lending this help, we are rendering a great service to them and to ourselves. When we can strengthen someone, we become stronger in the process.

Finally, let us be patient, knowing that our efforts are not always rewarded with success. We dare not become weary in well doing (Galatians 6:9), and we need to pray to God to help us in our down times. **John Wright**

COME AND SEE

There was once a good man who knew nothing about Jesus. He was such a good person that, a little later, Jesus said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile". But at first, he did not know the Lord. In John 1:45-46, we learn that Philip went to his friend, Nathanael and told him of the Savior, Jesus of Nazareth. Surprised, Nathanael asked, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip gave a quick, clear answer: "Come and see."

As we move about in our daily work, we find those who know very little or nothing about the Lord Jesus. When we tell them of the change He makes in the lives of men and women, they may doubt. When we tell them of the good, loving, caring congregation with which we worship, they may doubt. One of the best answers we can give to this is, "Come and see."

To those who read this article: If you are in need of salvation, if you are in need of being restored, or if you are searching for a church home, we believe we can assist you. We urge you to "Come and see" if we are all people say we are. **John Wright**

CONFORMED

Many years ago, I saw a lady canning jelly in glasses. To seal the containers, she melted paraffin wax and poured it on the top of each glass. I saw, too, the event of spilling the wax. It covered all the items on the table and ran onto the floor. When it cooled, it could be lifted off the table. It had conformed to the exact shape of the items it covered.

So it is with the Christian. All we have to do is relax our vigil and fall. In Romans 12:2, we are warned "...be not conformed to this world..." We can very easily be exactly like the sinful world about us by letting ourselves go.

Paul says that we have a nobler calling. Romans 8:29 explains that we are to be conformed to the image of the Son of God. This implies that we put ourselves on a higher plane, and grow to be like our Savior. May God help us to attain this exalted level. **John Wright**

CONFUSION

Many times we seem to be walking in darkness, not knowing whether we are right before God, or in opposition to Him. If we listen to present-day philosophers, they will tell you to do whatever makes you feel good. Some present-day religious teachers will tell you that as long as you are sincere, you are accepted by God.

In the long ago, God said, (Proverbs 16:25) "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Just because a thing seems right, does not make it right.

What is the answer to this dilemma? Is there a solid, lasting standard of truth we can trust to get us to heaven? Psalm 119:105 says, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." Enlightenment comes from the Word of God, not from philosophers or liberal religious teachers. Let us trust God's Word to guide us through life. **John Wright**

CONSIDER YOUR WAYS

The prophet Haggai spoke to God's people at a time when they were accomplishing nothing. They were "busy", but nothing good came out of their activity. He said they sowed much and gathered little. They ate and were not full. They drank and were not satisfied. Then he told them that they earned wages only to put it into a bag with holes. (Haggai 1:5-7) This reminds us of the people Isaiah wrote to, who were told that God could no longer stand their vain worship (Isaiah 1:11-15).

Considering these thoughts, we begin to "consider our ways". Are we working hard in the church to no avail? Do we seem to be in a rut, accomplishing nothing? Maybe it is time for there to be a great revival! This happens first in the heart of the individual Christian. Then the revival spreads to those around him. The growth continues until the whole church is on fire for Christ and involved in teaching others, inviting others to worship, serving and loving as Christ would have us do. Let Haggai speak to us today, and "Consider your ways". **John Wright**

CONTENTMENT

It is difficult to have complete contentment. Even knowing that God answers all prayers, provides all blessings, and gives strength to us doesn't deter us from getting a pang of envy, a stirring of discontent, or a slipping away from God. Paul learned the valuable lesson of being content in any and every condition he found himself (Philippians 4:11).

To avoid coveting, envy, greed, discontent and ingratitude, God, through the Hebrew letter, instructs us (13:5) "...be content with such things as ye have..."

As we ponder the wonderful truths of the Bible, we come away amazed at the longsuffering and love of our God, and a feeling of contentment in His service knowing He is always there for us whatever our need. **John Wright**

CONVERTING A SINNER

One of the finest feelings this writer has ever had was knowing that I was, in some way, responsible for bringing someone to Christ. Sin had blackened someone's soul, seared his conscience and set him on the road to destruction. Satan had done his work well.

Then, this person heard the gospel of Christ, decided that his life in sin had to be abandoned, and he obeyed the Lord. This is the most wonderful event that can happen in this life.

Everyone involved in this conversion needs to hear the inspiring words of the Bible: (James 5:20) "Let him know, that he which converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins!" Imagine that! Actually able to hide more sins than you can count! They are blotted out (Hebrews 8:12). **John Wright**

COSTLY MISTAKE

Knowing we all make mistakes may mitigate the effects of this story a little, but we must admit that some mistakes have more far-reaching results than others.

A young lady in the Bible wanted to have a husband and children. She especially wanted children. She was Michal, daughter of king Saul. He had an enemy, David, whom he wished to ensnare and overcome, so he gave Michal to be his wife to accomplish this purpose. It didn't work. David prospered.

During their short married life, she actually saved David from her father (1 Samuel 19:12). All seemed well with them. When David returned victorious from his conquests, she looked out a window and saw him playing music and dancing before the Lord for joy--and despised him in her heart. She even scolded him. Big mistake. Because of this action, she was made childless. For life! Later, she raised 5 boys for Adriel. She had to stand by and see them all hanged (2 Samuel 21:8-9). All this because she hated somebody doing the Lord's work. Let us not make the mistake of having hatred for those who serve God. **John Wright**

CUT-RATE RELIGION

We live in a time of discount houses, wholesale firms and direct selling companies, all offering prices that are less than "retail". Many people would never consider buying anything at regular price, and are always looking for a cut-rate price.

In the commercial world, this thinking is fine. But, in matters between us and our God, we must understand that **FULL PRICE MUST BE PAID**.

In Matthew 16:24, Jesus said, "...if any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." There is no discount rate on this price. Nothing but full payment will do.

Remember, Jesus paid the full price for our sins on the cross. It was a horrible price to pay. He even asked God, if it were possible, for His suffering to pass from Him. It not being possible, He paid it!

As we consider denying self and taking up our cross, let us not think of trying to get by on less than the full price. **John Wright**

DANGERS IN THIS LIFE

We probably all have talked with people who fear diseases, violent weather, social uprisings, wars, drought and many other dangers they feel are imminent. These folks cannot enjoy life or the blessings of Jehovah, being consumed with fear.

The Scriptures can help here. For example, Psalm 91:1-10. Here the writer tells of snares, pestilence, the terror of night, flying arrows of the day and plagues. Sound bad? But, on closer reading, he assures us of the help of God; using such terms as: "My refuge, my fortress, deliverer, habitation." Instead of the psalmist warning against all these fearful events, he reminds us that with our Father on our side, none of these things will harm us. Read especially verses 9-10, "Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling."

Paul said, (2 Timothy 1:7) "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." **John Wright**

DEAD AND ALIVE AGAIN

"The patient is not dead yet," the doctor said to the distraught family, "but as soon as he is dead, I will make him better than new." Absurd? In medicine, yes, but Jesus taught a wonderful lesson that says that not only does He prefer us to be dead, He requires it. Romans 6:7-8 tells us we are to be dead to sin, and alive to Christ. We are required to die so He can make us alive again.

Christ could not have brought life to this earth if He had not died. As He died, we are required to die: not on a Roman cross, but by forsaking sinful things and following Christ in everything. Having come alive again, we are with Christ. In Colossians 3:3, the apostle said, "For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." 2 Timothy 2:11 verifies this principle by saying, "It is a faithful saying, For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him."

This congregation invites you to "Come and die". That is, die to sin, and live for Christ the rest of your natural life. This is the only way that we have a hope of living with the Lord in heaven. **John Wright**

Articles courtesy of John Wright.

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DECAYED AND USELESS

In Genoa, Italy, the famous violinist, Nicolo Pagnini willed his marvelous violin to the city of Genoa. This instrument that had produced some of the world's finest music was accepted by the city. The condition of the gift, however, was that the violin was never to be played again.

Wood, when used and handled, wears only slightly, but wood not so used begins to decay. This lovely toned violin is now worm-eaten and completely useless.

It is the same with a Christian. The person who can do great things for Christ, if allowed to be used and handled by God, wears only a little, but becomes more beautiful daily. Whereas the Christian talent not used becomes stagnant, ineffective and totally useless.

In the parable of the servant with the one talent, the servant was condemned by his master simply because he did nothing. The rich, young ruler refused to let go of the thing that ruled his life. He was condemned because he did nothing in the service of his Lord. **John Wright**

DID I FAIL?

Recently, there was a conversation between two Christians. One was an elderly man who was one of the greatest workers in the church. In the talk that followed, he told of those that he tried to convert, and others he had tried to restore. He concluded, "But I failed."

Thinking on this, we can consider some Bible events. When Jesus was teaching, He wanted all who heard His message to turn to God. How about when He was teaching the rich, young ruler? The young man turned away sorrowfully without obeying. Had Jesus failed? Stephen (Acts 7:2-53) preached a powerful sermon to the Sanhedrin. They rejected his message and condemned him to death. Had he failed? Paul and Barnabas preached in Antioch (Acts 13) and were not able to convert any of the Jews on that occasion. Had they failed?

None of these people failed. They did their best. When we do our best to convert or restore someone and are not able to do so, we can't think of it as failure. If we do, we will begin thinking of ourselves as failures. When that happens, we will be greatly hindered in our work for Christ.

John Wright

DID YOU KNOW...?

The Bible was written by about forty men over a period of 1,600 years. It was divided into chapters and verses in 1250 by Cardinal Hugo. (The New Testament was divided into verses by Robert Stephens in 1551.) The Bible contains 3,566,480 letters, 773,746 words, 31,102 verses, 1,189 chapters and 66 books. The average word in the Bible contains fewer than 5 letters.

The words "Jehovah" and "Lord" occur 8,708 times and the word "reverend" occurs only once (Psalm 111:9) referring to God. The Old Testament was translated into Greek in 270 B.C.

The Bible is the first printed book. It was first reprinted in 1450. The first Bible printed in America was in an Indian language in 1663.

The Bible is the best seller in the world, printed in most of today's tongues. It is the only Book that reveals the origin, mission and destiny of man. It is a textbook on salvation. There is no conflict between the Bible and true science. **John Wright**

DO WHAT I DO

One of the most compelling reasons for us to closely follow the principals of the gospel is the impact our actions have on others. We can have confidence that we are on the road to heaven, and that we are showing others the road. This confidence does not come quickly or easily. Much study, prayer and effort goes into such an undertaking.

In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul says: "...be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." In 1 Thessalonians 1:6, he states: "And ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost."

Now, we understand the application of this principle in our lives. By speaking, acting, loving and thinking according to the Word of God, we can, in effect, say to others, "Be followers of me as I am of Christ", or "Do as I do". It is an awesome responsibility. We can do it with the help of Christ. **John Wright**

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?

Many events that occur in our lives are hard to accept. We wonder what God has against us when sickness overtakes us, or when financial reverses take everything we have been able to accumulate.

We can accept the good that God pours out upon us and thank Him for His bounty. It is a different matter when things not so good happen.

Paul gives us words of encouragement and wisdom in Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

Are we to believe that if we love God all things that happen to us work out for the best? That's what he said! He further clarified it by saying it is "the called" that is spoken of here.

Who are the called? They are those in the church! Yes, we can believe this. All things work together for good to us, if we love and serve God. **John Wright**

DON'T DIG UP THE BODY

We are subject to death. It will surely come to us all. When this happens, normally we will bury the body. Having done this, we don't expect to see it again. It is permanently buried. No matter what our feelings were toward that person in their lifetime, there is no reason why we would dig up the body. It is dead!

The analogy of death and burial is used in many Scriptural texts: (Romans 6:1-12 and Colossians 2:12-13 et al). The death mentioned in these passages defines a permanent change of status — that of change from living in sin to dying to sin, and also the change from being dead in sins to being alive in Christ.

Being dead to sin simply means that we are no longer actively engaged in sins. The old man of sin is dead. The new man has been brought into being (Ephesians 4:24).

Even though we are constantly tempted to sin, we cannot dig up the old body of sin that we once were. Sane reasoning would dictate that once that sinful life is dead and buried, it is to remain buried. Rather, rejoice in the fact that we are raised with Christ through faith in the operation of God, who made the whole thing possible (Colossians 2:12). **John Wright**

DON'T WAIT TOO LONG!

We have talked to people who need to obey Christ or who need to be restored to His fellowship. Often we are told that they feel they must work out certain things in their lives before taking such a step.

In Detroit, Michigan, a man applied for a marriage license, and then failed to appear for eleven years. When he finally came in to pick up the document, the clerk asked why he had waited so long. His answer: "We had a few disagreements about details."

How sad it is when a man or woman goes into eternity never having rendered obedience. A very dear friend once told me of delaying obedience because of a bad temper. That was many years ago. As far as we know, that temper is still standing in the way of salvation in Christ.

New Testament examples of this include the account of the rich young ruler who refused to give up his great wealth and the account of King Agrippa, who asked for delay for a more convenient season, or the great crowds at Athens who told Paul "We will hear thee again of this matter." So far as we know, none of the above ever obeyed Christ. **John Wright**

DREADED DISEASE

The man was afflicted with a terrible malady. No medicine could be found to cure him. No physician offered any assurance of a cure. In short, they were telling him he was doomed.

Then one day he heard about a cure. He would have to give up his position in the business world. He would have to give up his power, his friends and associates. He would have to live in a new environment, doing things he had never done before, and give up some things he loved to do.

None of this mattered to him. He had to be cured. So, he made the journey, found the cleansing, healing power, did what he was told, and was cured.

The above describes a person in sin. It is a terrible disease that will destroy one's soul unless we find and use the cure. No matter what we have to give up, we must acquire this blessed healing through the blood of Christ — the only medicine in the world that will cure the disease of sin. We may have to give up a lot of things, and begin new things, but it will be worth it all, being cleansed, being saved. **John Wright**

EFFECTS OF ANGER

Friendships are lost by displays of anger. Marriages end, fights break out, accidents occur, unkind words are spoken, and souls are lost due to venting anger.

The effects on the angry person include a red face, swollen neck, clenched fists, stumbling for words, and blurred vision.

Physiologically, an outburst of anger causes: deepened respiration; rapid heartbeat; arterial pressure rises; blood to shift from the stomach to the heart, central nervous system and muscles; the processes of the alimentary canal to cease; the freeing of sugar reserves in the liver; the spleen to contract, emptying its contents; and the secretion of adrenalin. At this point, any weakness in any part of the body can fail causing heart attack, stroke, or even death. Uncontrolled anger causes people to harm others, even kill. Jesus demonstrated controlled anger in Matthew 21:13. When He had made His point, His anger passed. We, then, can understand Paul's teaching in Ephesians 4:26 a little better: "Be ye angry, and sin not..." **John Wright**