

"The Heart of A Stranger"

by Elder Phillip Nichols
Blackshear, Georgia

"Also **thou shalt not oppress a stranger**: for ye know the heart of a **stranger**, seeing ye were **strangers** in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 23:9).

Greetings my brethren in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. I pray that God will help us to consider this verse of Scripture, for I feel that there is an important lesson which we are in great need of as our world around us is full of strangers. Before we begin, let us consider what a stranger is. A **stranger** may be defined as an outsider, foreigner, or a newcomer. Also we can consider that a stranger could be a person that we are not familiar with, one who is different, or one who is not an acquaintance.

Here in America, our nation consists of people from every nation under the sun. We have native Americans, Caucasians, Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, Jews - people of all colors, languages, customs and religions. So let us hear, "**Thou shalt not oppress a stranger.**" There are many ways one can be a stranger. For instance, we have all heard stories of a new kid on the block and how he suffered for just being different or just because he is the "new" person around. Sometimes people who have mental or physical problems are strangers and have suffered ridicule as people make fun of them, or even abuse them physically. All because they are not what some people consider "normal." Sometimes when people do not speak English, they are treated like savages just because they speak another language. A black family moves into a white neighborhood, and the white neighbors burn up their house for no reason other than because they are black. A Jewish home is ransacked and a swastika painted on the door just because they are of Jewish descent. A white kid takes a short cut through a black neighbor-

hood and a gang of black kids beat him up just because he is white. All true stories in which we have heard how "strangers" have been and are being oppressed. In a less known illustration, we find that in early American history, old Baptists were persecuted, beaten and locked up just because of their religious beliefs, or that they were different from others.

Deuteronomy 10:19 states, "Love ye therefore the stranger; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Now I confess that being around strangers is truly hard and very much a strain; yet God's word tells us that we are not to oppress them, but to love them instead. We are to show them compassion instead of hate. A perfect example of this is what we call the "Parable of the good Samaritan" found in Luke 10:30-37. This parable begins as an answer to a question. Verse 29 states "**...And who is my neighbor?**". This was asked because of the teaching found in verse 27, that we should love our neighbor as we do ourselves. The man asked the question thinking that he could justify himself, as he evidently loved and cared only for the people close to him, such as his family, friends or the people next door. Now if these alone were his neighbors, then he was most certainly just before God in doing his (God's) will in loving his neighbor. That however, is not the case. Jesus began to answer him by telling him a parable that teaches about a man who fell among thieves, was stripped, wounded, and left to die. We then find that a priest and a Levite came by at different times, and **both passed by on the other side**. A Samaritan then came by. Now Samaritans were what you could call "half-breeds" and were hated by the Jews because they (the Samaritans) were not of a pure lineage, and were considered worse than dogs

by the Jews. Whether the man fallen to thieves was a Jew or not, I do not know; but we do know that he was a stranger to the Samaritan. We find that the Samaritan, went to the man who fell among thieves, and had compassion on him. It would have been so easy for him to say, "He's just a stranger. I don't know him. It is none of my business. I don't have time for a stranger, and it is not my job to care for him." Yet we find that he did quite the opposite! He went to the man, overcoming any prejudice he might have had, and provided medical care, put him on his beast, took him to an inn, and took care of all the cost, and was willing to pay more if need be on his return trip. Jesus then asked him, "Which of these three thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among thieves?" And he said "he that shewed mercy on him." Jesus told him then to go and do likewise. These words are just as valid to us as they were to him, as we should not only help and have compassion for our loved ones or those of like race, culture and faith, but also to those of every walk of life whether rich or poor. No matter how different they are, how strange they are, they are all our neighbors. In other words, the whole world is our neighbor. When we have an opportunity to help someone, we should show love or have compassion on them. Let us do the will of Christ as He said, "Go and do likewise," and **be a good Samaritan!**

The next statement in the text is, "for ye know the heart of a stranger." God was telling them that they should understand because they were strangers in Egypt. Now Israel knew about being oppressed, for they suffered greatly under the rule of Egypt just because they were different. The Egyptians made the Israelites slaves, and even began to kill them. God reminded them of this, that

they might remember just how much they hated being oppressed, and that they should treat others just like they would want to be treated. We can also learn from this. We find in Matthew 7:12, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." So whenever you come in contact with a stranger, ask yourself how you would want to be treated, then treat them in the same manner. As God told Israel that they were strangers, we are also strangers. In an eternal sense, **we were strangers to God** because of Adam's sin by which we became dead in trespasses and in sin, unable to recover ourselves (Romans 5:6-29; Ephesians 2:1). In Ephesians 2:4-5, we find the words "**But God**, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)." If God could love me, who certainly was a stranger to Him, I should be able to love anyone, no matter what color, nationality, or whatever difference. I "know the heart of a stranger." Not only were we a stranger in an eternal sense, but also as a Gentile not knowing God's covenant of promise. Ephesians 2:12 tells us that we "were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and **strangers** from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Ephesians 2:19 goes on to state, "Now therefore **ye are no more strangers and foreigners**, but

fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." The Jews had the law or the oracles of God (Romans 3:2). They worshipped God in Jerusalem and had a worldly sanctuary, yet the Gentiles had not the word, nor the knowledge to serve or worship God (John 4:22). Yes, we were strangers to the household of God, but God broke down the middle wall of partition (Ephesians 2:14) to make us fellow-citizens. Even after we were quickened, we were still strangers as far as fellowship until we began to walk in the light. Even now when we walk in a way that denies Christ, He will deny us, or in other words, we are strangers to Him. (Luke 13:24-27; 2 Timothy 2:12). 2 Timothy 2:13 states, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." Thank God that nothing can separate us eternally from His love in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39). However, let us also realize that if we don't obey Christ and walk with Him, we are strangers to Him. 1 John 1:6 states it this way, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."

We are strangers also in another sense if we are followers of Jesus, for the world rejects Christ and His teachings. To the world, we are considered old fashioned, weird, and **strange** when we believe in and obey Christ Jesus! The world's ways are in **darkness** and carnality. Walking with Christ is walking in the **light** and after the Spirit of God, not after the world and its darkness. Even as Jesus was considered

a stranger and was hated and persecuted, so will we when we walk in His steps.

Let us look at some examples of what we encounter today. The world teaches to hate your enemies, but Jesus teaches us to **love and to do good to your enemies!** The world tells us if you don't like your companion to whom you are married, to divorce and get another one. Jesus tells us if we divorce for any reason other than fornication, it is adultery! The world tells us if it feels good, do it; but Jesus tells us to constrain ourselves, and do only that which is right. The world teaches to do it your way, but Jesus says to do it His way which is truly the best way, and for our good. There are many more examples we could consider, but the main thing we must remember is that our way and the world's way is contrary to God (Isaiah 55:8-9). Whenever we choose God's ways, the world (and even sometimes our friends and the brethren in the church) will consider us **strangers**.

Let us remember how it feels to be a stranger, and then let us treat strangers (to us) in a manner that we would want to be treated; and if someone who is different from you has wronged you in some way, forgive him as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. Let us also remember that if we don't forgive others, God will not forgive us now while we live on this earth. (See Matthew 6:14,15). Thank God that in heaven, we will all be like Jesus, and **there will be no more strangers!**

*"You can give without loving,
but you cannot love without giving."*



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For Sermons and Prayer Requests



Sing and Dance Before The Lord

by Elder Jason S. Solomon
Cumming, Georgia

Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints" Psalm 149:1

A New Song

A new year is upon us. It is a fine thing and a blessing. We have another opportunity to serve the Lord, another opportunity to praise the Lord, another opportunity to glorify the Lord. Like a heartbeat or a breath, a new year is a blessing.

As children of God, we should know that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17). Newness of life is the hallmark of the Spirit of God. When we follow Jesus in the Spirit, we see things from a new perspective and with the wonder of a child. This innocence is key to the joy found in His service in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Psalmist wrote many psalms calling for a new song for the Lord such as Psalm 149 that begins, "Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp" (Psalm 149:1-3).

The Psalmist cries out for praise and rejoicing in the Lord. He calls for dancing and singing with timbrel and harp, all to express joy in the King. What song brings joy to your heart? Sing to heaven from your heart.

Can You Dance?

On a day of celebration and praise, King David entered Jerusalem with the Ark of the Covenant in triumph over the Jebusites who had vainly challenged God's anointed to take the city from them. Needless to say, the King was victorious despite their attempts to keep him at bay. Following the battle,

he entered the city with no fear of attack.

"And David danced before the LORD with all [his] might; and David [was] girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart. And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts. And he dealt among all the people, [even] among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece [of flesh], and a flagon [of wine]. So all the people departed every one to his house. Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself! And David said unto Michal, [It was] before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD. And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spo-

ken of, of them shall I be had in honour. Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death" (II Samuel 6:14-23).

Despite his joyous display and clear faith in the Lord to protect him, his wife Michal despised the King, her husband. She scorned his dancing and betrayed her true feelings for the man God had chosen to replace her father, King Saul. We can imagine her gazing upon David frowning and shaking her head. Given to David by Saul years before, Michal harbored envy, anger, and resentment over the disgrace and destruction of her family. She envied his joy and the grace he received from God. His victory over her father made her angry, and she resented him for rejoicing in a way that apparently embarrassed her.

"Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?" (Proverbs 27:4). Reason fails when emotions reign. Michal did not realize that as David's wife she was blessed by the grace of God to survive the falling of her house. She was married to a man after God's own heart. She jettisoned her place at his side all because of unjust anger. She ruined a time of new beginnings for herself.

Today And Tomorrow

The lesson of this account is clear. Envy, unjust anger, and a hard heart lead only to grief. We should laugh with our brethren, and weep with them in meekness, for we know not what tomorrow may bring (Proverbs 27:1). The Lord tells His children to be full of joy, resting in the assured peace of His love, striving and reaching for the righteousness of Christ, all the while knowing that His righteousness covers our sins.

Under the Kingdom of God, we have this hope and assurance. Therefore, "take heed, brethren, lest there be in

any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:12-13). Trust the Lord with

today, and He will care for you again tomorrow.

With this new year ahead, boast not on yesterday's triumphs! Envy not the blessings of others, but rather look to God day by day to serve Him. Rest

in His unfailing love. Look for Christ in those you serve and do all that you do for the King. Dance before the Lord and sing a new song!

How Are You Doing?

by Elder Edward McIntyre
Fitzgerald, Georgia

Recently on a Monday, I asked someone, "How are you doing?" The reply was, "I am back in the real world." I thought for a second, "What does he mean by this answer?" Then it dawned on me that the person was saying, "I'm back to the day-to-day pressures that this present world throws at us each day."

We daily face demands upon our time to achieve more and more in our jobs, the responsibilities of family, the pressures of immediate response to many things that confronts us, disappointments, heartaches, bad news, unexpected financial pressures and really all the decisions that life brings upon us. We all are subject to the pressures that life presents to us on a daily basis. If you are immune to the above set of circumstances, you are the exception.

I think that it is necessary and very important for us as the children of God that we take time to steal away from the pressure of living our lives and just go away for a time of meditation to commune with One Who can give us rest and guidance to handle the affairs that we face on a daily basis.

Jesus recognized this need many times for Himself. Many times He saw the need of this respite for His disciples. This is evidenced by the following scriptures:

"And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone" (Matthew 14:23).

"And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done,

and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately" (Mark 6:30-32).

Take time for refreshing with the Master, it is good for the soul. *"Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth"* (Psalms 46:10).

Oh Lord, help me to see the need of Thy presence and guidance in my life today. Lead me away from the hustle and bustle of this present world for a little while that I might be able to see and hear You. Bless those who have needs this day, and forgive me of my sins. This I ask in Jesus' name. Amen!

Grow in Knowledge

1. "O give _____ unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever."
2. "O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon His _____: make known His deeds among the people."
3. "It is good _____ to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most high."
4. "O give thanks unto the God of gods; for His _____ endureth for ever."
5. "Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thee thanks; for that thy name is near thy _____ works declare."
6. "So we thy _____ and sheep of thy pasture will give thanks; for that thy name is near thy _____ works declare."
7. "Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the _____ shall dwell in thy presence."
8. "At midnight I will _____ to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments."
9. "In every thing give thanks: for this is the _____ of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."
10. "And whatsoever ye do in word or _____, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, give thanks to God, and the Father by him."

God Hath Given You Rest!

by Elder William M. Mullis
Waycross, Georgia

"Remember, the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, **The Lord your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land.**" (Joshua 1:13).

Scripture -- Joshua 1:10-18

The portion of this verse that I want us to concentrate our thoughts upon to **REMEMBER is this: REMEMBER, The Lord your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land.**"

As you remember the history of the children of Israel, you will recall that they were delivered from Egyptian bondage to go and serve God. Moses was the leader of the children of Israel, and their journeys in the wilderness contain many valuable lessons for us today. After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, it was finally accomplished that Canaan was about to be entered! Because of the sin of Moses and others, God said they could not enter Canaan, and they died in the wilderness.

Now we come to our lesson, and we hear the new leader of Israel - Joshua - speaking to the twelve tribes of Israel and declaring that within 3 days they are to pass over Jordan and enter Canaan land!

But all twelve tribes of Israel did not want to dwell in Canaan. Two and one half tribes desired to stay on the east side of Jordan to inhabit the land and rest there. To those two and a half tribes, Joshua says, **"Remember** the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, **The Lord your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land.**"

These two and a half tribes had reached a place that was plush with pastures for their cattle. And the people were tired of travelling. It was natural and to be expected that they would say, "This land is fine for us! We have gone far enough. We will settle here and you all cross on over Jordan and fight the enemy and get you a place to live." Now in looking back in history just

a little, we find that Moses had **already** talked to these two and a half tribes about this matter, and given them specific instructions about what **must** be done before God would bless them to **rest** and inhabit their land. **They had to cross Jordan and fight!** God does not give His people REST and bless them to inhabit Canaan except they first cross Jordan and fight the enemy!

Please turn in your Bible back to Numbers 32:1-30. Especially notice verses 1-7 and 16-23. In Numbers 32:5, we read where the children of Gad and the children of Reuben said to Moses, "If we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan."

"And Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, **Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?**" (Numbers 32:6).

As we read farther, we see that the children of Gad and the children of Reuben agreed to go forward into battle with their brethren.

Now we hear Joshua, the new leader of Israel, reminding the two and half tribes of Israel of their promise, "We will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them into their place. We will not return into our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance!" (Numbers 32:17,18).

The two and a half tribes were settled in their dwelling. They had been **blessed by God** to have such a great possession! Now **they must cross** the River Jordan and fight with their brethren against the enemy. They must leave their families, and all their possessions and risk their lives, **BECAUSE IT WAS GOD'S WAY!** "REMEMBER

that the Lord your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land."

The tribe of Reuben, and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh had **much work**, labor, and a warfare to win before they could return to their inheritance. But for them to turn back and refuse to go forward into battle with their brethren would result in the wrath of God being poured out upon them. Though they had a place of rest, they **could not keep it**, unless they walked by faith and stood against the enemy with their brethren! They were, therefore, warned by Joshua, "Remember that the Lord your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land." God had blessed them to be victorious and inhabit the land of Gilead. God had given them the land, and God had given them REST in the land. **It was possible for them to forget that God had given them** rest and given them the land. Therefore, Joshua tells them to **remember** that FACT!

Now let us examine ourselves. **Have we forgotten who has given us rest, and given us this land?** Let us consider the natural rest and land which God has given to us! Our forefathers had to cross a Jordan, as it were, and fight many battles for the United States of America to be established. But let all the glory go to God, for He is the one that gave our forefathers the strength, courage and determination to have ONE NATION UNDER GOD! God implanted His Spirit in their hearts. That is the reason they loved God and feared Him. John tells us (1 John 4:19) that we love God because **He first** loved us!

In the past 200 years, as the people of God in America have drifted away from Him, they were actually **FOR-**

GETTING that God had given them rest, and had given them the land! We show we forget that when we fail to worship Him in Spirit and in TRUTH! We show that we have forgotten that He has given us rest and given us this land when we fail to serve Him! We **are not** serving God unless we are serving the people of God! We show that we have forgotten God when we do not fear God, keep His commandments, and LOVE HIM with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. FOR A NATION TO FORGET GOD IS TERMINAL! IT IS FATAL! Listen, please, to Psalm 9:17, "The wicked shall be turned into HELL, and all the NATIONS THAT FORGET GOD!!!"

"Remember that the Lord your God hath GIVEN your rest and hath GIVEN you this land!"

Do we believe that God will TAKE AWAY OUR REST and our LAND? If we do, I believe we will **repent** from our present manner of life and return to the kind of godly living manifested by our nation for many years! IF WE THINK THAT **WE** obtained this rest, or that **we** can keep THIS LAND, we have forgotten that **GOD** has **given** us this rest and this land. **WE** cannot keep our nation by continuing to follow our own personal walks! We cannot keep rest or our land by military strength or strategy. **WITHOUT GOD'S HELP, WE ARE GOING TO LOSE OUR REST AND OUR LAND!** "EXCEPT THE LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain!" (Psalm 127:1).

When the people of God individually and collectively are REMEMBERING THAT EVERY GOOD GIFT AND

EVERY PERFECT GIFT COMES FROM GOD, they will be serving Him, praising Him, and looking to Him for everything. They will be obeying Him and trusting in Him to deliver them! As long as the people of God are walking with Him, they cannot be destroyed, whether with many or with few. **NO nation** can take away our REST and our land IF GOD will bless us! "If God be for us, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?"

Let's look back to the children of Israel again! After Israel inhabited Canaan when Israel was about to be cast out of Canaan land by the Moabites and Ammonites, they looked to THE ONE who gave them rest and gave them the land. They looked to God. Please read II Chronicles 20:1-4, 11-25.

We see in this reading that when the Moabites, Ammonites, and people of Seir began to attack Judah, the people REMEMBERED Who had **given** them rest and given them the land! "And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord."

Then Jehoshaphat began to pray fervently about the Moabites and Ammonites coming to take the possession WHICH THE LORD HAD GIVEN THEM to inherit.

"O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: BUT OUR EYES ARE UPON THEE!" (II Chronicles 2:11,12).

Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah REMEMBERED THE LORD THEIR GOD WHO HAD GIVEN THEM REST and had GIVEN THEM THE LAND. They trusted in Him as they confessed their weakness and ignorance!

And as we read the rest of this chapter, we see that God mightily intervened and delivered Judah from the enemy. God said, "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; FOR THE BATTLE IS NOT YOURS, BUT GOD'S." (II Chronicles 20:15).

The Lord who had given them rest and had given them the land, blessed them to keep the land! WHY? Because they REMEMBERED THE LORD, FEARED HIM, WALKED IN HIS STATUTES AND COMMANDMENTS, AND LOOKED TO HIM for strength and guidance in time of trouble!

Without God, we can do nothing! (John 15:5). **God will not** continue to bless our nation if we do not REPENT!

AMERICA! **Remember** that **the Lord your God** hath **given you rest**, and hath **given you this land!**

WHAT CAN YOU DO? Live each day to God's honor and glory. Thank Him for this rest and land we have! And live in such a way that you show by the deeds of your life every day that you REMEMBER and are **very mindful** that the Lord your God has **given you rest** and has **given you** this land!

WHAT A GOOD DAY THIS IS! FOR GOD has **given us this land and rest ONE MORE DAY.**

May God bless us all from this day forward to **REMEMBER that the Lord our God has given us rest and has given us this land!**

Answers to Grow in Knowledge

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|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Thanks - I Chronicles 16:34 | 4. Mercy - Psalm 136:2 | 8. Rise - Psalm 119:62 |
| 2. Name - Psalm 105:1 | 5. Wondrous - Psalm 75:1 | 9. Will - I Thessalonians 5:18 |
| 3. Thing - Psalm 92:1 | 6. People - Psalm 79:13 | 10. Deed - Colossians 3:17 |
| | 7. Upright - Psalm 140:13 | |

"The Gift That Keeps On Giving"

by Elder Don McWilliams
(Deceased)

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23).

We hear so much said about wanting to give a gift to someone that will keep on giving throughout the year, regardless of whether it is for Christmas, birthday, anniversary, or whatever occasion. We, as humans, want to give something that will remind the recipient of the gift and of the giver of the gift. It is usually something out of the ordinary that will accomplish the purpose.

The usual and common gifts are lost among the masses of like gifts; but that which is different, unusual and of very great value stands out above all the rest to be remembered through time by us.

The **gift** of God is eternal life! This

portion of Scripture has been quoted many times. However, many of those quoting these words **do not examine properly each precious word!** First, examine the word, gift. A gift is something that is given, not earned as wages are earned. Paul compares the two, the gift of God and the wages of sin. Death is earned or deserved through the sinful acts of our original parents, Adam and Eve. But eternal life is a free, undeserved gift bestowed upon us by the righteous act of our brother in the flesh, Jesus Christ, our Lord. (Read Romans 5:15, 18, 19).

How highly do we esteem the free gift of eternal life? Do we consider it to be above the ordinary and common gifts? Will it stand the test of time throughout the ages? If we could answer "no" to any of these questions, it

would not be eternal life, yet Paul uses the same word here used elsewhere. Therefore, we know without a doubt that he refers to a perpetual, everlasting, eternal, infinitive life hereafter.

With the assurance, through faith, of such a gift in hand, how great should be our gratitude to God? We would not hesitate to pour out great thanks to our friends and relatives for the gifts and presents, but we so tend to forget to be thankful to God for the greatest gift any human on the face of this earth has ever received.

Why must it be only at this time of year that our thoughts dwell on giving? God's gift gives every day of our lives, and on into eternity. Can our gratitude be any less?

".....think on these things." (Philippians 4:8)

Back To God

If you find yourself unhappy
Over some situation in your life,
If you find you're feeling bitter
With trouble and with strife,
If you find you are resentful
Toward your fellow men,
If you say, "I cannot do it,"
Stop and think, "Oh, yes, I can!"
Stop right where you are
Bring God into each day,
And your joy of living will begin
as you travel along your way.

Helen Kitchell Evans

"God uses broken things. It takes broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken grain to give bread, broken bread to give strength. It is the broken alabaster box that gives forth perfume...it is Peter, weeping bitterly (broken), who returns to greater power than ever." —Unknown

Pure In Heart

by Bro. Joshua Leach
Waycross, Georgia

What does it mean to be pure in heart, and how do we purify our hearts? First, think about what the word “pure” means. In Noah Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language, he defines pure in twelve different ways and references the Bible multiple times. Let’s take a few of those definitions and expound upon them with God’s word.

Webster defines pure as being “separate from all heterogeneous or extraneous matter” and “free from mixture.” I believe this is meant literally, like the examples of pure water or pure gold, but it holds a great lesson on how our hearts can be purified. Think about how you purify gold and silver. In the book of Revelation, Jesus counsels to “buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.” The richest and purest gold or silver is tried in the fire, and the fire burns away all the dross. Fire removes all the worthless material and matter. It removes all the impurities mixed in and results in purer gold or silver. “Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer” (Proverbs 25:4).

“Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross” (Proverbs 26:23). How do we remove the dross from our wicked hearts and make our hearts pure? I believe we can either purify our own hearts by the grace of God and by His guidance and instruction in the Bible, or else GOD will purify our hearts with fire (or judgment and chastening).

The best way to purify our hearts is by studying, rejoicing in, receiving, and obeying the word of God. The Bible proclaims that the “statutes of the Lord are right” and the “commandment of the Lord is pure” and the “judgments of the Lord are true and righteous.” (Study Psalm 19:8-9.) The commandments in the Bible are “pure,” and we

can purify our hearts by seeking them fervently in His word and applying them in our lives.

Webster also defines pure as being “free from moral defilement, moral turpitude and vice, and anything improper.” We need to examine ourselves and repent from sins that taint and harden our hearts. The Bible over a hundred times says “repent.” True repentance precedes blessings and forgiveness. Some of us find ourselves committing habitual sins and becoming addicted to impure and unclean sinful behavior, and we need to pray for God’s help to purge ourselves from those addictions.

By the amazing grace of God, we are able to overcome sin daily. “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.” (I Corinthians 10:13). We cannot rely on excuses. “The devil made me do it.” “I had a rough upbringing.” “All my peers and friends are doing it.” “I wasn’t raised in church.” All of these excuses show our unbelief in the mighty and merciful God of the Bible. We need to understand the great grace and power of God to help us overcome our circumstances and purge ourselves of iniquities in our lives and purify our hearts.

In II Timothy 2:20-22, we learn a lesson about a “great house” with “vessels of gold and silver,” but also vessels of “wood and earth,” vessels to honor and some to dishonor. If a man purges himself from the dishonorable vessels, he will be “a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.” He will be “sanctified,” or cleansed, or purified. We must purify our hearts in this manner, fleeing “youthful lusts,” following “righteousness” and “faith”

and “charity” and “peace.” We need to do these things “with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

Notice that those “of a pure heart” will be calling on the Lord. No man can purify himself without God’s grace upon him and God’s power and help and Spirit. Proverbs 20:9 states, “Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?” None of us can say that we have purified our hearts of our own will and strength. We must give all glory to God and realize that we need Him to help us and to give us serving grace to make our hearts pure. We must “call on the Lord” for Him to help us purify our hearts.

Webster continues that to be pure means **not** to be “vitiating with improper or corrupt words or phrases.” Proverbs 22:11 states, “He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.” Our words sometimes give away the condition of our heart. If we have a pure heart, we will bridle our tongues and speak with meekness and kindness and joy.

We also need to examine those with whom we fellowship, whom we call our friends, and those with whom we spend the most time. If we spend the majority of our time around people who rebel against God’s commandments, they will inevitably rub off on us and pollute our hearts. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Galatians 5:9). Therefore, we should purge out the old leaven and keep the feast with unleavened bread “of sincerity and truth” -- pure bread. The Bible equates commanding us to purge out the old leaven with the command to “put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” (Study I Corinthians 5:7-13.) Pure means “unmixed” and “separate,” and we are commanded to “come out from among them, and

be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing..." (See II Corinthians 6:17.) To be unclean is the opposite of being pure. To keep our hearts pure, we need to avoid close contact with uncleanness.

Webster also defines pure as being genuine, real, and true. He uses the example, "his motives are pure." Having a pure heart means we must be motivated by the right things. It is not enough just to keep the commandments and to do good. In order to have a pure heart, we must keep the commandments and do good for the right reasons.

Psalm 24:3-4 states, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." We must not be lifted up in vain pride! We must not begin to do good and think, "Oh how great I am." Pride is not a pure and good motivation and will result in us being "abased" and brought down.

Psalm 19:9 teaches us that the "fear

of the Lord is clean." Fear is a pure and clean motivation for doing the will of God. We are commanded in God's word to "Fear God" over and over in the Old and New Testaments. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). "God is a consuming fire." (Study Deuteronomy 4:24, Deuteronomy 9:3, and Hebrews 12:29.) He will baptize us with fire and judgment and chastening to purge us of dross and purify our hearts if we do not fear Him. We are commanded to "fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body" in Matthew 10:28. If we understand who the God of the Bible really is, and that He will and does judge His people while they live here in this world each day, then we will have reverent fear, which is a great motivator to serve Him wholeheartedly. While I believe that love is a better and more pure motivation, fearing God is required and a very pure and clean motivation of the heart.

Finally, brethren, the purest of hearts is motivated by love. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth

through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:" (I Peter 1:22). We should serve God out of our love for Him, and we should love His people. We should love others, praying for them, ministering unto them, and serving them. We should have great charity, which is love in action. "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:" (I Timothy 1:5). I believe this is the most pure of motivations. We learn in I Corinthians 13 that everything else we do is of little to no value without charity, without love in action. We are nothing without charity. We can feed all the poor, prophecy, have great wisdom and understanding, and give our bodies to be burned, yet "it profiteth me nothing" if we don't have charity. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (I Corinthians 13:13). Those that have a pure heart will have a great love for God and His people that can be seen by their actions.

"IT IS FIT AND BECOMING IN ALL PEOPLE, AT ALL TIMES, TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND REVERE THE SUPREME GOVERNMENT OF GOD; TO BOW IN HUMBLE SUBMISSION TO HIS CHASTISEMENT; TO CONFESS AND DEPLORE THEIR SINS AND TRANSGRESSIONS IN THE FULL CONVICTION THAT THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM; AND TO PRAY, WITH ALL FERVENCY AND CONTRITION, FOR THE PARDON OF THEIR PAST OFFENSES AND FOR A BLESSING UPON THEIR PRESENT AND PROSPECTIVE ACTION."

— ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The Angelic Message

by Bro. Don Bierbower
Grants Pass, Oregon

The year by general consensus is 5 B.C. The place is the fields near the city of Bethlehem which was also known as the city of David. Shepherds are living there on the plain guarding their flocks. We can imagine that the stillness of the night lulled them into a state of drowsiness, when suddenly the glory of heaven shone around and over them in beaming radiance! Then, in blinding splendor, the angel of the Lord came upon them like a flash. They are beyond being startled; they are terrified! The thought must have raced through their minds, "We are going to die," for like their forefathers, they believed that one could not look upon God and live.

As they trembled in fright, the angel spoke the commanding and calming words, "Fear not." With their fears relieved, they listened with wonder as the angel continued to speak to them, "I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

The good news that the angel brought was that the event that the prophets had written about and Israel had longed for through the centuries had come to pass. Their Messiah had come: He who is the Star out of Jacob and the Scepter out of Israel, He who will be a king in a kingdom that will last forever. Everything that was written concerning Him in the Law of Moses, by the prophets and in the Psalms was about to find fulfillment in Him. At long last, He has come! He is here! What boundless joy there is in this angel's message of good news!

God, in the Old Testament, is often referred to as Savior: He who saves, brings salvation, rescues from sin and safely keeps those whom He rescues. The Greek word "Christ" is a translation of the Hebrew "Messiah". Both words mean "the anointed one." Interestingly, the name "Jesus" means

"Jehovah is Savior," the name that the angel told Mary and Joseph to name the child because "He shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:31).

This message was for "all people," which was understood to be Israel in particular, to whom the promise of the Messiah had been given. But it extended to those outside the covenant as well. When the Christ child was presented in the temple, Simeon took Him in his arms praising God and saying, "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:30-32).

The angel's message concluded with the words, "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12). To lowly shepherds, God chose to announce the greatest event in human history—the birth of the long-promised Savior, Christ the Lord, who was to be born in the city of David. This child, of the royal lineage of King David and heir to his throne, was born not in a house, but a stable; lying not in a bed, but on a straw in a manger, wrapped in bands of cloth.

It is interesting to note that in the culture of that time, a new-born was bathed, rubbed with salt and then wrapped in strips of cloth from the feet to the neck. Those little arms and hands were wrapped close to the body so that movement was not possible. Such was the sign that the angel gave to the shepherds that they would find the baby wrapped or swathed in cloths.

Suddenly, the awe-stricken shepherds beheld a great company of the heavenly host appearing with the angel. Thousands of angels appeared and filled the expanse of the sky. We can only imagine what a choir of a myriad of angels would sound like in

saying, "Glory to God in the highest." This momentous event is cause for all heaven to declare the glory of God as shining forth in the incarnation of the Son of God. God became flesh and made His dwelling among men. "And on earth peace, goodwill toward men." The Roman world was experiencing the "peace of Rome" marked by external peace. But the angelic host proclaimed a deep, lasting peace of mind and soul made possible by the Savior who saves from sin. When we believe that Jesus has paid for our sins we feel His peace and forgiveness. "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:9).

Having delivered their message, the angels return to heaven. The shepherds said one to another, "Let us now go unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, and which the Lord hath made known unto us." They left their sheep, hurried to Bethlehem, and there found Mary, Joseph, and the baby who was lying in a manger, just as the angel had said. After they had seen the child, the shepherds spread the word concerning what had been told them, and all those who heard were amazed.

We read that Mary treasured all these things in her heart. These would be the angelic announcement to the shepherds accompanied by the glory of the Lord with angels praising God, the annunciation by the angel Gabriel that she would give birth to the Son of God, as well as all other events leading up to His birth.

The shepherds went back to their flocks, but did so with deep new emotions. Like the angelic host, they continued glorifying and praising God. They were privileged to hear and to see prophecies of the Messiah spoken and written hundreds of years earlier, fulfilled in Bethlehem. God has been faithful to His word. Born of a virgin,

God became man. He is the Christ, the Lord and Savior. He is Emmanuel: God with us!

While sitting in on an adult Bible class, this writer heard the teacher tell the class that by reason of the virgin birth Jesus was half God and half man. Can that be true? A student in the class gently, but firmly, corrected the teacher, stating that Jesus is all God and that He is all man. How the virgin birth came about is a mystery that will forever remain so. We are human and as such cannot comprehend what is known to God only. Unlike the pagans' gods who, according to their mythology, came down to mortal women and cohabited with them so that their offspring were half gods, the virgin birth was very different. By means of the virgin birth, Jesus entered human life without the mediation of an earthly father, born not as a result of sexual union, but as a result of the Holy Spirit's overshadowing. In the book of Genesis, we read that the Spirit of God moved or hovered over the waters in the creation of the earth. Similarly, the Holy Spirit by His creative action of overshadowing brought about this miraculous conception!

The prophet Isaiah wrote, "Behold, a virgin, shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel" (7:14). Matthew wrote that this was fulfilled in the virgin birth of Jesus (1:22-23). Accordingly, Mary was a virgin at the time of conception and at the time of delivery. When the angel made his announcement to her, she asked, "How shall this be..?" The angel answered, "with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:34-35).

The birth of Christ has special meaning for the believer, for without His birth there could not have been those other important events surrounding His life: His death, resurrection, and ascension. His virgin birth attests that He is sinless, the perfect sacrificial Lamb, that He is fully God and fully man. His sacrificial death atoned for the sins of His people, those whom the Father had given Him. To these He imputed His righteousness so that they are free from sin and guilt and stand be-

fore Him clothed in His righteousness alone. His bodily resurrection testifies to the believers' death to sin and resurrection to the newness of life, and that they will receive glorified bodies fashioned after that of Christ's. His ascension confirms that God, who became man, took divinity and humanity into heaven where He now intercedes in behalf of His people, rules as King of Kings, and from whence He would come to judge the world and receive His own unto Himself.

Mankind in general has benefitted from the birth of Christ which positively influenced human history from the first century on. Most remarkable was the rapid spread of Christianity and how lives were changed. Within a thirty year span, the gospel had been preached throughout the vast Roman Empire. The Apostle wrote that the Gospel was preached to every creature under heaven (Colossians 1:23), and that in all the world it is bringing forth fruit (Colossians 1:6). It has been suggested that perhaps as many as one person out of ten was a Christian. By the second century, Christians were so numerous that one defender of the faith wrote to the emperor stating that "we are everywhere; we are even in your own senate." In spite of cruel persecutions, their numbers grew.

The changed life of Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the church, to Paul the apostle to the Gentiles, is an example of God's saving grace. He wrote to the church at Corinth and listed some of the sins that they formerly practiced: sexual immortality, thievery, idolatry, slandering, drunkenness, greediness. He penned these words, "ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9, 11). The history of the church has a long list of men and women whose lives were changed from being notorious sinners to notable saints, and this is attributable only to God's saving grace.

Christianity placed value on human life for which the pagan Romans had little regard. Gladiatorial contests and in dramas that portrayed the death of

an actor in which the actor had to actually die are examples. Unwanted babies were carried outside the city and left on a hillside to die. Often, Christians would rescue them and raise them in the faith.

Christianity elevated the status of women and broke down racial and social barriers. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, neither is there male or female; for ye are one in Christ Jesus," wrote the Apostle (Galatians 3:28). Christians led in the founding of hospitals and orphanages, in the abolition of slavery, and in civilizing primitive cultures.

In the middle ages, when Greece was threatened with the advance of Islam, many Christian scholars in the arts, sciences, and humanities fled to the universities in central Europe. They introduced the classics in the Greek language. As a result, the Scriptures were studied from the original languages. Men began to question the dogma and practices of the Western Church which led to the Protestant Reformation. Scripture was translated into the languages common to the people. It is doubtful that a single country in western Europe was not touched in some way by the Reformation. The very existence of our own country is directly attributable to the Reformation.

The world is a better place because of the birth of Christ, the Lord. The Apostle wrote: "When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman... to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." He then wrote that because of our being placed as sons, God has made us heirs! As His children, we have a right to all that He has promised. (See Galatians 4:4-7.)

How can we not be overcome by that same joyous message that those shepherds were privileged to hear and to spread? "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (II Corinthians 9:15), a gift that is above and beyond our ability to describe!

The Salt of the Earth

By Bro. Marshall Thomas
Valdosta, Georgia

Several years ago while visiting our Local Health Department on business, I had a conversation with the Director of Nursing. The name of a mutual friend came up and she described this person and his family as “The Salt of The Earth.” At that time, I could not say that I knew exactly what Jesus meant when He referred to His disciples as “The Salt of the Earth”. I did, however, feel that this lady did not know or understand what she was saying.

The person of whom she spoke, and his family, were friends of mine. He has a son that was a friend to my two sons. We were all hunting buddies. This man was a farmer, a hard worker, honest, friendly, reliable, funny (a great story teller), patriotic, served his country in the Korean War, paid his taxes, very down to earth, likable person to be around. He had a lot of good attributes. But as long as I knew him, I never heard of him or his family ever being involved in the church or any of the church activities. I did hear him mention one time that his daddy was a member of an old line Primitive Baptist Church.

Over the years I've thought about the statement that the lady made one day concerning our friend and his family as being “The Salt of the Earth”. I want us to look in the Scriptures to see what Jesus has to say about it.

When Jesus began to preach, He said, “Repent: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” This Kingdom is a spiritual kingdom that Jesus established when He shed His blood on the cross. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus chose twelve disciples and taught them daily until the time of His crucifixion.

Huge changes were about to take place in the lives of God's people. Jesus was preparing His disciples for the work to be done after He returned to Heaven following his death, burial,

and resurrection. These disciples would become Apostles (messengers) preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, directed and led by the Holy Spirit under the new covenant.

God's people at this time were under the old covenant. Now when Jesus began His ministry, He did away with the old covenant and established the new covenant. The covenant known as the covenant of grace and truth.

John 1:17 says, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

Matt. 26:28 says, “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

Under the new covenant, God's laws are written in our hearts where we now live by faith, guided by the Holy Spirit—Heb. 8:10-13 declares this new covenant. The new covenant introduced a new era known as the church age, or gospel age—the era in which we now live.

When Jesus began His ministry, he not only preached, but he healed all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. His fame spread quickly, and large crowds began to follow Him.

In Matthew chapter 5: 1-12, we see that Jesus is teaching His disciples about the Kingdom of Heaven and the characteristics of the people in the Kingdom. In verse 13, Jesus says to His disciples, “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.”

I think it is important for us to examine what it means to be a disciple. Jesus said His disciples were the salt of the earth. A disciple of Christ is a follower of Christ. Jesus said to Peter and Andrew, “Follow me, and I will make

you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him” (Matt. 4:19, 20).

We see that disciples became not only followers of Jesus, but also they became Fishers of Men. Take notice they did not choose Jesus, but Jesus chose them. Jesus in speaking to His disciples says in John 15:16, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” Jesus says in John 15:8, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”

A disciple has to know Jesus. John 10:11 says, “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” Disciples love Christ and each other. John 15:9 says, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.” 1 John 4:19 tells us, “We love him, because he first loved us.”

John 13:34-35 says, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Disciples believe and obey Jesus.

John 8:31 says, “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed”. Disciples must put Jesus first, before family and friends. Luke 14:26 says, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”

A disciple must bear his own cross—that is, we are to crucify our own sins. We are to bear the cross before all and stand up and be totally committed to Jesus. Luke 14 27 says, “And whoso-

ever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”

“A disciple must remove anything that will hinder his service to Jesus—leave it all behind. Luke 14:33 says, “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”

In Romans 12:1, the apostle Paul tells his brethren (in Christ) by the mercies of God to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is their reasonable service.

Now let’s look at the Salt.

What Does Salt do?

It enhances, it influences, and it impacts;

It seasons or brings out the best;

It preserves, prevents things from spoiling or going bad;

It cleanses!

We, the Church (disciples), carry the gospel message that impacts or changes lives for the better. And the gospel saves (preserves) people from going wrong, and saves God’s people from the error of their ways here in time.

Acts 10:38 tells us that Jesus went about doing good. The Church (disciples) are to follow the example of doing good. Ephesians 2:10 tells us that we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, and that God hath ordained that we should walk in them. Part of that work is telling others what Jesus has done for us. This work influences or impacts the lives of others.

What is the Salt’s Savor?

The savor is the ingredient that gives the salt the ability to season or to

make an impact for good. My understanding of this lesson is that (among other things) the savor represents love. What happens if the salt loses its savor? It is worthless, it cannot season, and it has not influence or impact. You might ask, “Well, how could the disciples or Church lose its love?” Matt. 24:12 says, “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.” Sin brings about loss of love.

In Revelation 2:1-7, Jesus writes to the church at Ephesus commending them for their work, labor, and patience. But in verse 4, He declares His dissatisfaction because they had left their first love.

If we, the Church, become complacent or indifferent (love grows cold) in our service to God, we are of no value in this world to Him. And if we don’t repent, He will remove the candlestick!

In I Corinthians 13:1-3, God tells us that no matter how much knowledge we have, or how strong our faith is, or whatever we do in service to Him, if we do it without love, it is worthless! Spiritual love is produced by the Holy Spirit as a result of Jesus abiding in us (disciples) and us abiding in Him.

When Jesus told His disciples that they were “The Salt of the Earth,” He knew that He would be sending them out to teach and to baptize, and that they would have a positive impact on God’s people. Jesus uses the analogy of salt to His disciples (us the Church) to teach us that when we are motivated by love, we can have an impact and influence on the lives of others that will be for their good and to the glory of

God!

In Summary:

To qualify as the Salt of the Earth, one must:

1. Be chosen by Christ
2. Follow Christ
3. Be a fisher of men
4. Bring forth fruit
5. Know Jesus
6. Love Jesus and the brethren
7. Believe and obey Jesus
8. Put Jesus first in his life
9. Bear his own cross
10. Abandon anything that will hinder service to God
11. Present himself a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is our reasonable service

is our reasonable service

I hope that you can see that “The Salt of the Earth” entails much more than the attributes of the mutual friend that we presented in the beginning of this article. It is my opinion that the most important experience in our lives here on earth is our fellowship with Jesus Christ! Jesus began that relationship when He entered our hearts. This is what enables us and gives us the desire to maintain that fellowship with Him. We are commanded to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves! If we keep these two commandments, God will see us as “The Salt of the Earth!” What a wonderful experience to feel the presence of God in our lives. May we all continue to do those things that strengthen our spiritual lives, and truly be the salt of the earth, full of savor!

“Whereas, the Senate of the United States devoutly recognizing the Supreme Authority and just Government of Almighty God in all affairs of men and of nations, has, by a resolution requested the President to designate and set apart a day for national prayer and humiliation: And whereas, it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history: that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord...” — Abraham Lincoln

Training Up A Child... "A Legacy of Respect"

by Sis. Arlene Strickland
Fernandina Beach, Florida

"Train up a child in the way he should go:
and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

As I watch parents with their children in this modern society in which we live, I am appalled at the lack of respect they are instilling in their young ones. Is it any wonder that our society, as a whole, is losing respect for the older generation and the wisdom and values it encompasses?

There was a time in the not so distant past when children respected their elders and honored the place held by them. Young people sought the counsel of the older generation because they respected their experience and wisdom. In our current society, the older generation is considered to have no value and seems to be a burden to many.

Placing the older generation in high regard is not a bygone trend; it is a biblical principle! In *Leviticus 19:32*, the Lord states, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord." In this one passage, the solution to this problem screams to be heard: not many people fear God anymore! I will cite three passages of scripture to illustrate the value of a healthy fear of God:

Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understand-

ing." Honoring the hoary head shows an individual has an understanding of his place and the place held by the older person.

Psalms 111:10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever." If you are honoring the hoary head, are you not also praising God, keeping his commandment and gaining understanding?

Proverbs 1:7 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." To receive instruction and advice from the older generation as a result of the wisdom they have gained from their own journey is such a blessing! They have insight that the young ones will never have until they have reached that age!

There are ways to honor the hoary head in our daily lives that extend far beyond speaking to them or holding the door open for them. What I am talking about involves sacrifice. When a child or a young person is seated in a room and an older person walks into the room, that person should immediately vacate their chair and offer it to this person. It is a shame and disgrace for a younger person to be seated and the older person is left standing! An-

other sacrifice has to do with social gatherings that involve a meal. When it is time for the meal to be served, children should never be the first in line. The older ones should be allowed to go first. The child has no concept of the sacrifice that the older ones have made to insure the food will be on the table in the first place. They need to earn their place at the head of the line! Your child is no hungrier than anyone else and this will teach him compassion for others if he is reminded that he is not the only one who is uncomfortable. You will also be teaching him to put others before himself.

The older ones have fought for the freedom of this country which the younger generation now enjoys. They have sacrificed years of their life and have friends who paid the ultimate price for our country and all the privileges that we enjoy.

Please teach your children to honor the place held by the elderly and you will be rewarded. Not only will it be a blessing to your children, but it will also be a blessing to you. Remember, the way you teach your children to treat the older generation is exactly how they will treat you when you are old!!

I Give, I Have Given, I Will Give

adapted from F. E. Marsh

I. Bread and Water

John 4:14: "The water that I shall give"

John 6:51: "Bread that I will give"

II. The Word of God

John 17:14: "I have given them thy word"

III. Eternal Life

John 10:28: "I give unto them eternal life"

IV. A New Commandment

John 13:34: "A new commandment I give unto you"

V. A Supreme Example

John 13:15: "For I have given you

an example"

VI. Peace

John 14:27: "My peace I give"

II. A Privileged Inheritance

John 17:22: "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them"

Bible Reading Calendar for February

| DATE | MORNING | EVENING |
|------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1 | Exodus 27,28 | Matthew 21:23-46 |
| 2 | Exodus 29,30 | Matthew 22:1-22 |
| 3 | Exodus 31,32,33 | Matthew 22:23-46 |
| 4 | Exodus 34,35,36 | Matthew 23:1-22 |
| 5 | Exodus 37,38 | Matthew 23:23-39 |
| 6 | Exodus 39,40 | Matthew 24:1-22 |
| 7 | Lev. 1,2,3 | Matthew 24:23-51 |
| 8 | Lev. 4,5,6 | Matthew 25:1-30 |
| 9 | Lev. 7,8,9 | Matthew 25:31-46 |
| 10 | Lev. 10,11,12 | Matthew 26:1-19 |
| 11 | Lev. 13 | Matthew 26:20-54 |
| 12 | Lev. 14 | Matthew 26:55-75 |
| 13 | Lev. 15,16,17 | Matthew 27:1-31 |
| 14 | Lev. 18,19 | Matthew 27:32-66 |
| 15 | Lev. 20,21 | Matthew 28:1-20 |

| DATE | MORNING | EVENING |
|------|------------------|--------------|
| 16 | Lev. 22,23 | Mark 1:1-22 |
| 17 | Lev. 24,25 | Mark 1:23-45 |
| 18 | Lev. 26,27 | Mark 2 |
| 19 | Numbers 1,2 | Mark 3:1-21 |
| 20 | Numbers 3,4 | Mark 3:22-35 |
| 21 | Numbers 5,6 | Mark 4:1-20 |
| 22 | Numbers 7 | Mark 4:21-41 |
| 23 | Numbers 8,9,10 | Mark 5:1-20 |
| 24 | Numbers 11,12,13 | Mark 5:21-43 |
| 25 | Numbers 14,15 | Mark 6:1-32 |
| 26 | Numbers 16,17 | Mark 6:33-56 |
| 27 | Numbers 18,19,20 | Mark 7:1-13 |
| 28 | Numbers 21,22 | Mark 7:14-37 |

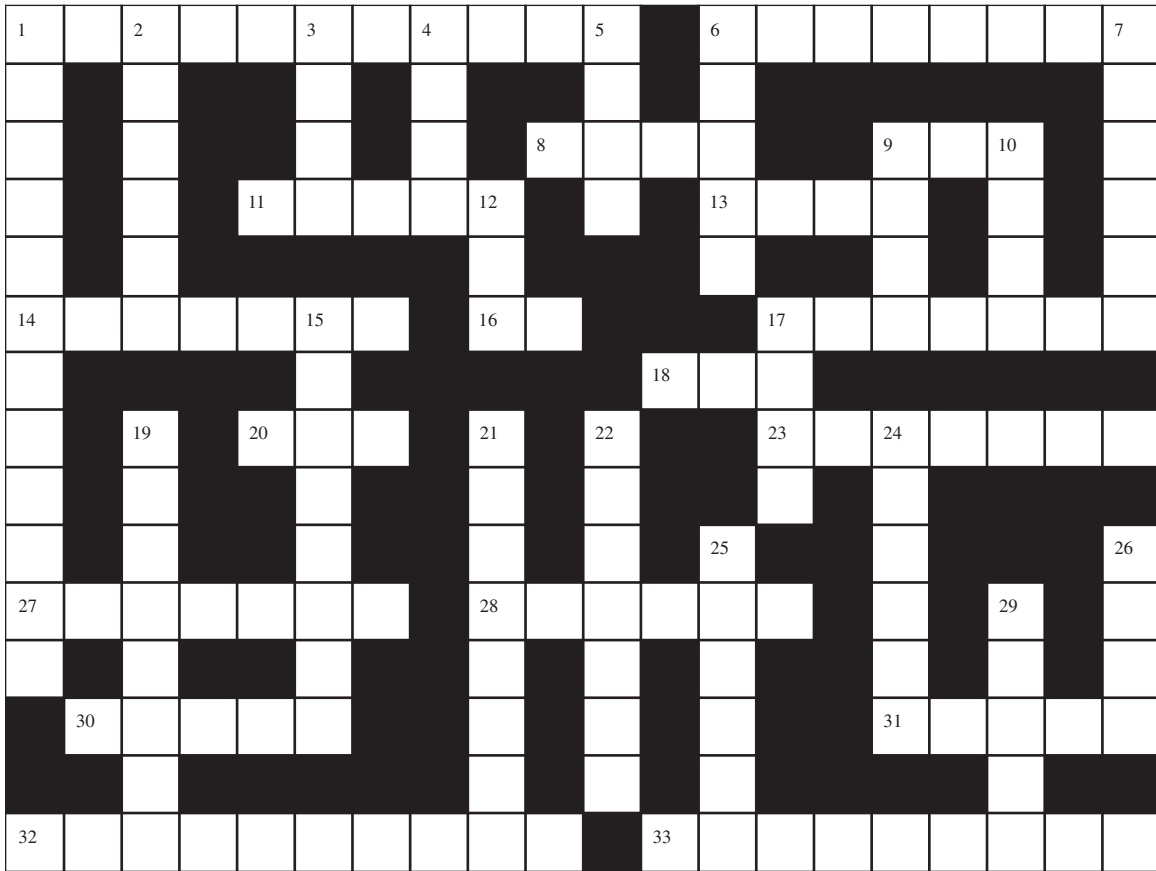
**ANSWERS TO
CROSSWORD
PUZZLE
JANUARY 2015**

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|----|---|----|---|----|----|----|----|---|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|---|---|----|----|---|---|----|---|
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| | E | | | | | | R | | | O | | | G | | | | | R | | | | L | | | | E | | |
| | S | | 8 | B | | | R | | | 9 | N | O | N | E | | | 10 | P | E | R | I | S | H | | | E | | |
| | T | | 11 | U | N | T | O | | | | | | O | | | | | A | | | | O | | | | M | | |
| | R | | I | | | | 12 | R | E | P | O | R | T | | | | | D | | | | | | 13 | R | | E | |
| | O | | L | | | | | | | | | | A | | | | | | | | | | 14 | S | E | N | T | |
| | Y | | D | | | | | 15 | G | | | | 16 | N | O | T | | | 17 | B | U | T | | | P | | H | |
| | E | | | | 18 | S | | | 19 | F | I | R | S | T | | | | | L | | | | 20 | B | U | Y | | |
| 21 | D | R | I | N | K | | | | V | | | | | | 22 | F | | | 23 | A | R | T | | | T | | 24 | G |
| | | | | | A | | | | E | | | | | | | O | | | M | | | | 25 | B | E | A | R | |
| 26 | T | H | R | I | S | T | | | | | | | | | 27 | R | E | J | E | C | T | | | | D | | A | |
| | R | | | | E | | | | | 28 | K | | | | | | | | L | | | | 29 | W | | | V | |
| | U | | 30 | M | | | 31 | M | 32 | E | A | N | S | | | | 33 | P | R | E | V | A | I | L | | I | | |
| | T | | A | | | | | | | R | | | | | | | | | S | | | | S | | | T | | |
| 34 | H | U | N | G | E | R | | | | 35 | W | I | T | N | E | S | S | | | | | | 36 | R | E | A | D | Y |

Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS

1. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our _____: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought:..." 6. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for his mercy _____ forever." 8. "The prophets prophesy falsely and the priests _____ rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" 9. "If we _____ that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." 11. "For the wages of sin is _____;..." 13. "...but my Father giveth you _____ bread from heaven." 14. "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a _____ tree bringeth forth evil fruit." 16. "The ungodly are not _____; but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." 17. "...but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be _____." 18. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous _____ availeth much." 20. "If we believe _____, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself." 23. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds _____ Christ Jesus." 27. "...chiefly, because that unto them were committed the _____ of God." 28. "...Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be _____." 30. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your _____;" 31. "Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, _____ be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." 32. "For if ye forgive men their _____, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:" 33. "And he that _____ the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit;..."



DOWN

1. "...because he maketh _____ for the saints according to the will of God." 2. "All that the _____ giveth me shall come to me;..." 3. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be _____ known unto God." 4. "Blessed is the man _____ walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly;..." 5. "But I said unto you, that ye also have _____ me, and believe not." 6. "And all the inhabitants of the _____ are reputed as nothing:..." 7. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be _____..." 9. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that _____ me." 10. "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will _____ Father forgive your trespasses." 12. "...and in _____ law doth he meditate day and night." 15. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the _____." 17. "And Jesus said _____ them, I am the bread of life:..." 19. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new _____..." 21. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good _____." 22. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that; if we ask anything according to his will, he _____ us:" 24. "And he shall be like a tree planted by the _____ of water,..." 25. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest;...if there be any _____, and if there be any praise, think on these things." 26. "...and him that cometh to me I _____ in no wise cast out." 29. "But by the _____ of God I am what I am..."