

THE WORD OF TRUTH

OTIS Q. SELLERS, Editor, Jan. 1944

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IN DEATHS OFTEN

This article is written in answer to a question. What did Paul mean when he said he had been "in deaths oft" in 2 Corinthians 11:23? This question has arisen several times in my classes, and I had given it some study in advance of receiving it from one of my readers.

Faith takes God at His word and acts upon it. Unbelief always looks around to see if there is not some other explanation. God's word will stand any amount of investigation, and the true student will always be willing to weigh every reasonable meaning that may be given to any passage. Nevertheless, care must be exercised lest we be guilty of looking for some other meaning so as not to feel required to accept the true sense.

The language of 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 is literal. Each statement means exactly what it says, and the reader has no difficulty in accepting most of these at their face value. Of the twenty-six things listed here, twenty-four of them are taken to mean just what they say, while two of them are usually interpreted and revised in some manner so that men of little faith can accept them.

Men do not hesitate to believe that Paul actually received thirty nine lashes from the Jews on five separate occasions. They readily accept that he was beaten three times with rods, that he was stoned once, shipwrecked three times, in constant peril from many sources, and that he was often weary, sick, cold and naked. They accept everyone of these statements as meaning just what they say. However, when they come to the statements "in deaths oft" and "a night and a day I have been in the deep," they find it difficult to accept these in their literal sense.

The phrase "in deaths oft" is commonly made to mean that Paul was at the point of death many times, and the statement "a night and a day have I been in the deep" is made to mean that he was floating around on top of the sea in a life-boat, or clinging to some bit of wreckage from the ship. If these statements are taken in their simple and literal sense they would mean that Paul actually died numerous times, and upon one occasion he actually spent twenty-four hours in the sea, not floating on top of it. And it is certainly open to question as to whether we are to take these statements literally, or as figures expressing some other sense.

Years ago, I accepted, without investigation, the popular idea that "in deaths oft" meant that Paul was at the point of death many times. This idea has long ago been abandoned as superficial. In Philippians 2:27, Paul speaks of Epaphroditus and says he was "sick nigh unto death." This gives us a clear example of the expression Paul used when he desired to say that one was at the point of death. But he uses no such language in 2 Corinthians 11:23. There he says, "in deaths, many times," as it might be literally translated.

A very attractive interpretation of this came to me after I began to examine it. It could be that Paul used the word *death* here in a figurative sense the same as we do when we say "black death" in reference to that virulent plague which ravaged Asia and Europe in the fourteenth century. The word *death* is used in this figurative way in Revelation 2:23, where it is evident that it means plagues. Therefore, it could mean that on many occasions Paul, in carrying on his ministry, may have come upon cities that were ravaged by such things as cholera, and faithfulness to his stewardship required that he minister the Word to these stricken people. As stated before, this interpretation is very attractive, but I am still inclined to take the statement "in deaths oft" in a more literal sense.

It seems evident that no human being could ever undergo the experiences that Paul passed through and remain alive. Much of the persecution that came upon him had death for its object, not torture. At Lystra, certain Jews from Antioch persuaded the people to stone Paul. This does not mean that they threw rocks at him causing a few bruises or minor wounds. If the common procedure usually followed in stoning men were carried out here, Paul would have been bound and thrown to the ground. Then the leader would have raised the first great stone and crashed it down with all possible force upon his chest. This was referred to as "casting the first stone," a term used by our Lord in John 8:7. This was usually sufficient to insure death, nevertheless, following this the others raised their stones and cast them down upon the prostrate form.

This is what happened to Paul at Lystra. And God either miraculously preserved him through this ordeal, or else he raised him from the dead after the stoning was over. In **Acts 14** we read that after Paul was stoned, he was dragged out of the city, his persecutors believing him to be dead. Whether this belief was correct or not, we are not told. But we do know that when the disciples gathered around, he stood upon his feet and returned to the city. The next day he is seen busily engaged in travel and the proclamation of the gospel.

The language of Acts 14:19 is such there is room for more than one opinion in regard to its meaning. However, it is my conviction that this stoning caused Paul to die, that he was dead while being dragged out of the city, that he remained dead until the disciples gathered around him, then suddenly the breath of life from God entered into him again and he again became a living soul. If this is true, this was one time that Paul was *in death*. Man could kill him, but he could not remain dead as long as his course was unfinished.

The chief reason why men cannot accept the statement "in deaths oft" to be a literal statement of truth is found in that great blunder of almost all theology - that the moment a man of faith dies he is transported at once to heaven. If this were true, it would mean that Paul went to heaven many times, only to be wrested from that glorious place to begin anew his sufferings upon earth. We who have been delivered from this error, who know from Scripture that the dead are dead until they are raised,

are confronted with no difficulty in believing that Paul died numerous times.

In this connection, Paul's statement, "a night and a day have I been in the deep," (2 Cor. 11:25) takes on a new light. An ingenious explanation of this is that the Greek word *buthos*, translated "deep" means a marsh or swamp. This explanation clears away all difficulties, since it is easy to conceive of Paul spending twenty-four hours in a swamp, but it certainly brings an anti-climax to the statements that precede it. Furthermore, the use of *buthos* in the Septuagint shows that it means the *sea* and not submerged land. See Exodus 15:5, Nehemiah 9:11, Psalm 69:15.

The statement "a night and a day have I been in the deep" follows the statement "thrice I suffered shipwreck" This is its context and it must be understood in the light of it. It is my opinion that upon the occasion of one of these shipwrecks Paul was cast into the sea, the waters swallowed him up and he drowned. For twenty-four hours he floated around in the sea, until at last a wave cast him upon the shore. Once again the breath of life returned to him from God - once again he was brought out of the state of death.

There is no record of this experience or either is there any record of the times he was shipwrecked. All we have are his two statements, "thrice I suffered shipwreck," and "a night and a day have I been in the deep." Both of these statements, I believe.

The End

If vileness is set on high among the sons of men, it is because the sons of men prefer it to the stern purity of goodness. A *corrupt* people will crown corrupt men and put them aloft. (Selected).

When God speaks a promise, faith repeats it as a certitude and prophesies in the line of revelation. "Thou shalt" is man's answer to God's "I will." (Selected).

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TRUTH FROM THE SCRIPTURES

(Continued from Vol. 7 No.2)

We know nothing about the inhabitants of the original creation. Speculation in regard to them is useless. Our ignorance of the inhabitants of the original heavens and earth has led some to think that it was not inhabited. But we can feel assured that since it was not created a waste and was formed to be inhabited, that it was neither a waste nor uninhabited before the disruption (Isa. 45:18). It is my present understanding that the angels of Satan, spoken of in Revelation 12:7, were the inhabitants of the original heavens and earth. This was before the fall of Satan and his angels.

In the disruption or overthrow of the original creation, only the earth became waste and empty, therefore, the original inhabitants have usurped the heavens where they will hold fast until they are cast into the earth. Revelation 12:8-9.

In connection with His great purpose to bring about a new heavens and new earth, God has determined to fill His new creation with images of Himself. That is why man was made in the image and likeness of God, then was instructed to be fruitful and multiply. If man had not sinned, the process of multiplication would have filled the earth with images of God, each one a true representation and revelation of God's greatest image the Son of God. This is what man will be in the new heavens and new earth. The entrance of sin and death into the human race has so spoiled us that out of all men born of woman, only Christ has truly represented and revealed the Father. God's great

work of redemption has for its purpose and goal the restoring of men so that in the new heavens and earth they will again be in the image and likeness of God.

When God made man, He made him of the earth and for the earth. The earth was his home, not heaven. Adam was not a pilgrim sojourning for a brief time upon the earth with a hope that some day he would be taken from the earth and placed in heaven. To understand and believe these facts is to hold in one's hand the key that will unlock the doors that lead to much truth.

In this connection it will be well for us to consider the hope and the destiny of Adam. When God created him and placed him in the garden, what was his destiny? Was the garden to be his eternal home? Was he to be taken from the garden and removed to heaven when he finished his course?

The answers to these questions are obvious. Adam's destiny was in accord with the purpose for which he was created. The garden in Eden was not to be his eternal home. His destiny was the new heavens and new earth. He had been created in relationship to this; he was to live in relationship to it. That which was the goal of all that God did was to be Adam's goal also. Furthermore, there is no basis in Scripture for the idea that Adam had any thought, hope or desire of ever leaving this earth and going to heaven. His one hope and desire was to live in the new heavens and new earth.

By disobedience, Adam failed to live in relationship to the new heavens and new earth. Instead of filling the earth with images of God, he brought death upon himself and a curse upon the earth. The work he failed to do will be done by the Second Adam, the Son of God. Out of humanity that rests under sin and death, He is redeeming those who will be conformed to His image - the One who is the true image of God.

After living nine hundred and thirty years upon the earth Adam died. His next experience will be when he is raised from the dead. His resurrection will occur after the thousand year millennial kingdom has run its course. It will be his privilege to have his life reviewed at the great white throne. Since he already paid the penalty for his sin of eating of the forbidden tree, that sin will never come before the throne of judgment. **[Archive Note: This sentence makes it clear to the reader that the PREMILLENNIAL Kingdom of God had not yet been understood by Mr. Sellers -- RDH]**.

God gave us an accurate revelation of Adam when He said:

"In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, until you return unto the ground; for out of it you were taken: for you are dust and unto dust you will return." Genesis 3:19.

If one believes these words it is impossible for him to believe that Adam is anywhere else except in the ground. Some say that these words refer only to Adam's body. In answer to this I would say that I rejoice in having a faith that has been altered to fit the Word of God. The Word does not need to be altered to fit my faith. God was speaking to Adam and of Adam, and the word *body* does not appear in this part of the Scripture.

Many who are not familiar with the truth concerning God's great general purpose in contrast with His special purposes will wonder why it is that Adam will not be in the millennial kingdom. The answer to this query is that Adam was in no way related to or connected with God's special purposes in the kingdom of the heavens. The millennial kingdom is a special purpose of God, and it precedes the new heavens and earth in about the same way that an architect's drawings precede the building. However, in order to make this plain it will be well to briefly consider the one great general purpose of God for the human race, and then the special purposes that make their contribution to, and are related to, the great general purposes of God.

In the coming eons some of the redeemed will be far above all that is of the heavens, but this was not the general purpose for which God made man. Some will be in the heavens, and others will be

upon the earth in the millennial eon, but neither of these represent the primary purpose for which God created man. These blessings represent the special work that God has done, is doing, and will do for some men, but they do not represent His general purpose in creation and redemption. If Adam had never sinned, all his descendants would have been in the new heavens and earth. But he did sin, therefore, any of his descendants who are there will be there because of the work of Christ.

It has been set forth in previous studies that the one great general purpose of God, the one toward which He is ever working, and to which all that He does is related, is to bring about that glorious consummation called the new heavens and new earth. In that blessed state everything in the heavens and earth will have been completely transformed so that it all configures to God. It will be filled with inhabitants who are in the image and likeness of God. God's great general purpose in relationship to the human race is in relationship to this final and eternal state. In fact, all the emphasis that man has falsely placed upon "dying and going to heaven" should have been properly placed upon being raised from the dead and entering into the new heavens and new earth.

FROM ADAM TO ABRAHAM

The time period from Adam to Abraham covers two millenniums, that is, two thousand years. Of the millions of people who lived during that time, not one of them possessed a single line of what we have in the written word of God. Yet everyone of them possessed that true light which enlightens every man that comes into the world (**John 1:9**). They possessed the inherent and instinctive knowledge of the Supreme, and a conscience that told them the difference between right and wrong in all matters concerning which man will be judged. Every human being who lived between Adam and Abraham had two possible destinies. In the language of Scripture these two destinies can be described as *life* and *death*.

Of course, they would all die because of Adam's sin; but this is not what is meant by saying their destiny could be death. Furthermore, all who died would be raised from the dead and restored to life because Christ would die for them; but that is not what is meant when it is said that the destiny of some could be life. They would die because of Adam's sin, and they would live again because of the righteousness of Christ. But it was after they experienced resurrection that the great issue of life and death would be settled. And it will be settled upon the basis of the life that they lived while upon the earth.

If at the judgment of the great white throne they are granted eonian life, they will enter into the eon of the new heavens and new earth. If not, then the life that they received in resurrection will be taken from them and they will die the second death. The perfect justice of this is set forth in the fact that every man who dies because of the sin of Adam will be given another life because of the righteous work of Christ. This will permit everyone to stand before the great white throne where every detail of one's life can be considered. For example: there is the benefit of light and the lack of light, having heard the gospel and not having heard the gospel, having seen the mighty works of Christ and not having seen these works, the will to do but lacking the ability, the possession of the ability but lacking the will to do - all these shall be fully considered at the great white throne.

"But," someone will ask, "do all men appear before the judgment of the great white throne?" They do unless they are a part of the special callings of God. These special callings are the sand and star seed of Abraham and the Church which is His body. Between Adam and Abraham no one was the seed of Abraham and none were members of the Church which is His body. There are three out-resurrections that precede that great general resurrection that takes place after the thousand years are complete. Those who attain to these resurrections will never appear before the great white throne. They will have entered into blessing a thousand years before.

There is no event wherein the perfect justice of God will be manifested like it will be at the great white throne. Even those who are condemned there will confess that His judgments are righteous and holy. I know of no idea that is more dishonoring to the justice of God than to hold that all will be condemned who stand before the great white throne. This judgment is a hollow mockery if a man's fate is already decided in advance of his appearance there. Such ideas put this judgment upon the same basis as that of the Mexican general who ordered, "that the man be given a fair trial and then shot." The facts that are uncovered at the great white throne will result in many being admitted to life in the new heavens and earth, and the facts that are revealed there will cause many to die the second death.

With the single exception of Enoch, all who lived between Adam and Abraham are now dead. The case of Enoch is an excellent example of a special truth and a special purpose of God. It is appointed unto men once to die. This is a great general truth, and if any do not die it is because God deals with them in a special way on the basis of some special truth. If we search the record from Adam to Enoch we see that God dealt with all men in accord with the great general truth that it is appointed unto men once to die. But when we come to the record of Enoch, he was dealt with in a special way, therefore, not in accord with the truth that death is the lot of all men. He was translated so that he would not see death. However, this special dealing of God with one man did not alter in any manner the general truth that it is appointed unto men once to die. After the translation of Enoch, men continued to die just as they had before.

There are four great general truths in the Word of God that should be carefully noted. These set forth the general plan of God's dealings with the whole human race. Related to each of these are the special truths that set forth God's special dealings with some of the human race.

First, there is the great general truth that it is appointed unto men once to die. If any do not die, it will be because God deals with them in a special way. That some will be dealt with in this special manner is made clear by the declarations found in I Corinthians 15:51 and I Thessalonians 4:17.

Secondly, there is the great general truth of the general resurrection. If no man were ever dealt with in a special way all would be raised just prior to the great white throne. If any are raised before that time it will be because God deals with them in a special way. That some will be raised before that general resurrection is seen from such passages as Hebrews 11:35 and Philippians 3:11.

Then, there is the great general truth that all men must appear before God's bar of judgment. See Eccles. 12:14, Hebrews 10:27. Nevertheless, there are some who will never appear in this judgment. Their lives have already been dealt with by God, and they will enter into blessing.

Finally, the general destiny of all who receive life is the new heavens and earth. If any receive life prior to the establishment of that perfect state it will be because of God dealing with them in some special way. He dealt with the seed of Abraham in a special way so that his seed will enjoy life in the kingdom earth one thousand years prior to the new heavens and earth. From Abraham's seed He out-called some who will enter into the heavens. At the present time He is out-calling some who will enjoy life far above all heavens.

It should be clearly understood that at no time does God's special dealing set aside or alter His general dealing with mankind. God's present purpose in the proclamation of Christ is to clear men from their guilt so that they will have life in the new heavens and earth. The sole promise that God makes to those who put their simple faith in His Son is that they will have life. This life will become theirs in the new heavens and new earth. As stated before, if they enter into life prior to this, it will be because of some special dealing of God. Will the time ever come when men will see that faith can secure more than life? There is no idea that is more harmful to progress in the life of faith than the conception that we get all that God can give to us the moment we first believe.

When God quickens *a sinner* to that body of truth of which John's gospel is the epitome, faith is then possible, and if that faith is exercised the sinner will pass from death to life. That is, he passes from a state wherein the second death was surely his lot to a state in which he is sure of life in the new heavens and new earth.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16.

When God quickens *the one who has life* to that body of truth of which Romans is the epitome, faith in that body of truth is then possible. If that faith is exercised, that is, if that body of truth is believed, the believer in Christ will enter into a life of liberty and victory, making it possible for him to walk every day of his life in the truth of grace, at perfect peace with God. Myriads of believers will witness that a new day dawned in their life when God quickened them to and they believed the truth of Romans. It is in Romans, and nowhere else, that we learn the great liberating truth of being "dead to sin." It is my conviction that no one has ever entered into life by' believing but what God has later called them to put their faith in the truth of Romans. Many have failed here, being perfectly satisfied with the truth that they were not going to perish. "All I care is that I am saved" is the answer that many give when God calls them to faith in the truths revealed in Romans.

It is from those who are dead to sins that God quickens some to that body of truth of which Ephesians is the epitome. "Dead to sins" is the correct translation of Ephesians 2:1 and S. When God quickens men to this truth, it is His call to them to put faith in it. This faith is seen in our response to it - taking God at His word and acting accordingly. This is a special work by which God is out-calling the church which is His body.

The fact that God is doing a special work today does not mean that His great general work has ceased. Many by the "obedience of faith" are entering into life. Others by the "obedience of conscience" may be gaining the same end. But some because of a special work of God are being made members of His "high calling." The destiny at these is a realm far above all heavens. There, in the coming eons, they will express and represent the grace of God.

But we have wandered far afield in our study, and must return to consideration of those men who lived between Adam and Abraham.

In the first two thousand years of human history, no one expected to "die and go to heaven," or even to be raised from the dead and "go to heaven." If they did, their hope was false, for all true hope must be based upon a revelation of God. Upon the basis of what God had said to Adam they could assuredly expect to die, and with equal assurance they could expect to be raised from the dead. And the light of conscience would tell them that after resurrection their lives would be reviewed in judgment.

This judgment would settle their destiny. It would either be life in the new heavens and new earth or the second death, either to perish or have eternal (eonian) life. Having the knowledge of the One Who is Supreme, and a conscience that told them the difference between right and wrong in all matters that would be judged at the great white throne, they were responsible to fear God and work righteousness. This is the testimony of **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14:**

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

To this testimony Peter gives whole-hearted concurrence in **Acts 10:34-35.**

Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him.

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM

The first eleven chapters of Genesis covers the first two thousand years of human history. As we come to the end of that long period of time we see God beginning to deal in a special way with one man and his descendants (seed) after him. Up to the call of Abraham, He had dealt with the whole human race upon the basis of light and conscience, two things no man lacked. But beginning with Abraham, He dealt with him and his descendants on the basis of light, conscience and a special revelation. This special revelation made possible for Abraham, not only the obedience of conscience, but the obedience of faith. That is, God gave Abraham something to believe that no other man had, and the believing of this brought him a special reward.

However, it must never be forgotten that when God began to deal with Abraham and his descendants in a special way, this did not in any manner change His method of dealing with the balance of mankind. They were still dealt with upon the basis of light and knowledge. From them God expected the obedience of conscience and the obedience of faith. God accepts the obedience of conscience from those to whom He never gave the law or who never had the gospel.

Practically all of the Bible from Genesis 12 to the close of Acts is a record of God's special dealings with the children of Abraham. Even in the Acts period the special work with the gospel among the Gentiles was for the avowed purpose of provoking the children of Abraham to jealousy and emulation. Nevertheless, now and then there is a revelation of some who, while they were in no way connected with Abraham, lived up to their responsibilities before God and manifested complete obedience of conscience toward God. Among these are Job, Melchisedec, Abimelech, Jethro, Hiram king of Tyre, the Queen of Sheba, Nebuchadnezzar, the wise men, and Cornelius. I believe that everyone of these will enter into life in the new heavens and new earth. None of them will be in the millennial earth or heavens, except Cornelius. His destiny was changed when he put his faith in the Christ that Peter proclaimed to him.

ABRAHAM AND LOT

In the record of Abraham and Lot we find one of the outstanding examples of the general and special dealings of God with men. Those two men were the same kind of men, living in the same country. They were bound together by ties of relationship, Lot being the nephew of Abraham. Both of these men, in common with all men, possessed that inherent and instinctive knowledge of the Supreme and a conscience that told them the difference between right and wrong. They had the same responsibility before God, to revere Him, do what they knew to be right and refrain from what they knew to be wrong.

Abraham's father Terah had failed to revere God and had turned from Him to idols (Joshua 24:2), but there is good evidence that both Abraham and Lot were God-fearing men. This is seen in Abraham's immediate response to the call of God, and the description of Lot as a righteous man. 2 Peter 2:7-8. Because of this, these two men, like all God-fearing and righteous men before them, could expect to have life in the new heavens and new earth. And what these two men were, any other man on earth could have been. Reverence and righteousness are in no way based upon election or calling. God expects these of every man, and any man can give them to God. The obedience of conscience is God's will for all, and it is the standard by which all will be judged.

But with almost dramatic suddenness we can see, in Genesis 12, God ceasing to deal with Abraham in the general way that was common to all men. He gave Abraham a special revelation, command and promise. These were not given to any other man on earth, not even Lot his nephew, nor Melchisedec who was superior to him in every way. This gave to Abraham the opportunity of believing a revelation, obeying a command and laying hold of a promise. And great was the reward for doing these things.

God's word to Abraham told him, (1) to get out of his country, (2) get away from his kindred, (3) get away from his father's house, (4) go to a land that He would show him. God's promises to him were, (1) to make of him a great nation, (2) to bless him, (3) to make his name great, (4) that he would be a blessing, (5) to bless all who blessed him, (6) to curse all who cursed him, (7) that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed.

Thus it was that God told Abraham what He expected of him, and Abraham was also told what he could expect of God. This call was to Abraham alone, and no matter how desirable or attractive it may have been, no one else could have any part of it. The call was not to them - no, not even to Lot.

Nevertheless, as Abraham leaves Mesopotamia to respond to the call of God, we witness an exceedingly strange spectacle. The leader of the party is Terah, the father of Abraham, a man who has failed to live in accord with the light and knowledge he possessed, and whose life had never been touched by God. Second in the party is Abraham, a man who has lived up to his light and knowledge and who had been called of God. Then there is Lot, blindly attempting to respond *to* another's call.

How often we see these scenes repeated today! We see one whom God has quickened in regard to the importance of searching out the truth in His Word, taken in charge by some so-called minister who has no interest in anything beyond his own messages on a half-dozen subjects. Then there is one who has been called by God to a life of liberty and victory, being discouraged by some hireling shepherd who turns him from his desire to know God's word, finally getting him settled down in some weary round of church activities, having convinced him that such things are the true service of God. These false leaders will always seek to have God's called ones settle down far short of the place to which they have been called by God. Saddest of all is the case of those wherein pastors of human churches have turned aside those whom God has called concerning the church which is His body.

Thus it was with Terah. When God called Abraham, he took charge of things, started out with Abraham and Lot to go to Canaan, but stopped at Haran instead. There the entire party remained until Terah was dead. Genesis 11:31-32.

When the journey to Canaan is resumed, we see Lot trying to answer Abraham's call, and Abraham is trying to help him do it. But Lot had no call to answer, and even though he went as far as Canaan, there could be no close fellowship of walk between the two. When Lot separated himself from Abraham by turning toward Sodom, Abraham's answer to God's call was complete.

God called Abraham in relation to a special purpose for this earth - a purpose that precedes the new heavens and earth. Therefore Abraham will be raised from the dead at least one thousand years before Lot to enter into blessing in the millennial kingdom of the heavens. Lot will not live again until after the thousand years are finished. He will enter into life and blessing in the new heavens and earth.

Some may feel that the righteousness of God requires Him to deal with every man alike. They question the justice of any special dealing. These objections are fully answered by our Lord in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard as set forth in Matthew 20:1-16. The general agreement was a day's wages for a day's work. Some were dealt with in a special way and received the same compensation for only one hour's work. When an objection was raised to this, the householder replied:

"Is it not 'lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?'"

God will keep to the letter every agreement He has made with man. He will render to every man according to his deeds (Rom. 2:6). To those who can produce the obedience of conscience, He will render eternal (eonian) life (Rom. 2:7). To those who produce the obedience of faith, He will also give eonian life (John 3:16). However, beyond the fulfillment of these agreements, He may do something special for some, even to the extent of placing them far above all heavens. It is certainly right for Him to do as He pleases with His own people and His own things.

(To be Continued, Vol. VII, No. 4)

THE POWERS THAT BE

The pamphlet under this title is doing a good work, and accomplishing results in bringing men to see that Paul's declaration in Acts 28:28 is a dispensational boundary line. Scores of appreciative letters have been received from those who have found in this pamphlet a simple and honest exposition of a passage that has long been an enigma. In refutation, some have pronounced their *ipse dixit* and declared that the words "higher powers" and "the powers that be" do refer to civil authorities, but no attempt is made to clear away the difficulties, solve the problems or answer the questions that arise from the acceptance of such a position.

In this pamphlet there is one regrettable error, due to faulty proof reading upon my part. It appears on page 6, line three, under the subhead *Romans 13:1*. Instead of *spiritual authorities*, this should have read *superior authorities*. This paragraph was incorrectly copied from the original article (See *Word of Truth* Vol. V, No. 5, page. 94) where it reads correctly "*superior authorities*."

Those who read my pamphlet will discover that in the paragraphs that immediately precede this error the term "superior authorities" is used twice as being the correct translation of *exousiais huperechousais*, and the word *superior* is used in the sentence that immediately follows, and in the succeeding paragraph. A careful reader would have recognized from the context that the word *spiritual* here should have been superior. And one should always be a careful reader if he intends to publicly criticize another's message.

The criticism of *The Powers That Be*, written by my good friend Harry Bultema, and published in *The Morning Star*, October, 1943, was based entirely upon this one error. By using this one error he attempted to reduce my interpretation to "utter absurdity."

I make no complaint concerning this, the fault rests with me because of careless proof reading. The mistake was one of the head and not one of the heart, since there is no point where I exercise more care than in turning Greek into English.

Those who have this pamphlet can correct the error in their own copies by changing *spiritual* to *superior* in line eighteen of page six.

(Continues in Vol. VII, No. 4, Facing the Truth)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question. What follows the eon of the new heavens and new earth?

Answer. The answer to this is that *the eon* of the new heavens and the new earth will be followed by the new heavens and the new earth, an eternal state. As an illustration we can say that the war-time *United States of America* will be followed by the *United States of America*. The eon of the new heavens and earth is a demonstration eon in which the perfection and completeness of the work of Christ is clearly set forth. The demonstration aspect of this eon comes to an end, but not the new heavens and the new earth. This is emphatically stated in **Isaiah 66:22**.

"For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain."

Question. Did God want Adam to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil?

Answer. To some, this question may appear to be foolish, but it is far from being that, since there are those who teach that it was God's intention for Adam to do the very thing he was commanded not to do. The revelation set forth in the first three chapters of Genesis is of such nature that it is evident that since God commanded Adam not to eat of the tree, threatened a dire penalty upon him if he did, and visited this punishment upon him, then it must not have been God's will, purpose or intention for Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit. If God desired Adam to eat of the tree, then He desired him to sin. If Adam's act were in full conformity with the intention and desire of God, then it became an act of righteousness. and could not have been called sin. There are those who hold that God did desire man to sin in order that He might have opportunity to display His grace. I repudiate this idea in its entirety.

Question. Did God know that Adam would sin? If not, then would He not have been taken by surprise when Adam did sin? And if God knew it, then was not the sin of Adam an absolute necessity since the knowledge of God could never be in error?

Answer. Man, in his complete failure to understand the true God through His written and personal Word, has tried to make up for his lack of understanding by clothing Him with certain attributes, such as omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. Having done this, he insists that God must at all times be all-powerful, all-present and all-knowing. This actually denies the deity of God, since God can do as He pleases and none can require Him to be anywhere, to do anything or to know anything. He will not be bound by any attributes that men have vainly tried to saddle upon Him. For example, in the statement, "God cannot lie," we have something that God cannot do. There can be and are divine limitations to such things as God's supremacy, omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience. However, it must be recognized that these limitations of the Deity are self-imposed, and they are ever subject to the divine will.

God can and has limited His supremacy by "suffering all nations to walk after their own ways" (Acts 14:16); but He can step in at any time, take the supremacy to Himself, and require every nation to walk after His ways. He can limit His knowledge by remembering sins no more; and He can choose not to know certain things. Yet, He can bring every detail of the past, present or future to His mind. If God is unable to limit His knowledge, then He is not God. Those who recognize this truth, they also believe in the deity of God. Those who do not are forced to think that God is controlled by some law over which He has no power.

When God permits a man to walk after his own ways or a nation to walk after its own ways, He imposes a limitation upon His knowledge and chooses not to know in advance just what they will do. Therefore, since God in His sovereignty gave Adam liberty, I do not believe that God chose to know

in advance what course Adam would take. He was not taken by surprise when Adam sinned, since He is equal to any occasion. Neither did He need to hurriedly prepare a redeemer. In relationship to another purpose it was already foreknown that Christ would offer Himself as an obedient sacrifice, therefore, the sin of man could be charged against the infinite value of that sacrifice. It must never be forgotten that man's sin was secondary in the sacrifice of Christ. His great act of obedience was occasioned by the disobedience of the Son of the Morning, not by the sin of Adam.

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

****The greatly increased interest shown by so many in *The Word of Truth*, the constantly growing number of new readers, and the fact that many are dependent upon this witness for instruction and encouragement in the truth, has prompted me to take a step of faith and announce that beginning with the next issue this periodical will become a monthly. The necessary arrangements have been completed; and as far as possible all future issues will be placed in the mail about four days in advance of the first of each month. The magazine will not have as many pages as it does now, but a survey has shown that the friends desire to have it more often even if it has fewer pages. Of course, this step involves additional expense, but after the initial expense of securing additional equipment is out of the way, the increased cost will not be prohibitive.

****On February 26, one year of ministry will have been completed over Radio Station WAIT, Chicago. There have been 312 broadcasts of fifteen minutes each. At this writing figures are not complete, but the records show that 1385 listeners have corresponded with us in regards to the literature. The purpose of this ministry is to teach, not to sell literature. Nevertheless, being very anxious to follow up the radio ministry with the printed page ministry, I rejoice that so many new friends have become sufficiently interested to send for the literature,

****I always proclaim my convictions from the housetop, and never attempt to hide anything I believe. Everyone of these 1385 correspondents received at once literature which informed them of my stand on ordinances, human destiny and right-division. In spite of this 519 of these have requested all future issues of *The Word of Truth*. There will be many more, as it takes about three or four months on the average before one who receives literature decides to become a regular reader. In publishing these figures, no boast is made, nor do I desire to draw any comparisons. If I had written pamphlets on *Are We Approaching Armageddon* or had published my guesses as to when and how the war will end [ed. Note: this was written in Jan. 1944], my correspondence would have increased a hundred-fold. But I have been faithful to my calling, therefore, I rejoice in the number who have responded, few though they may be when compared with the popular ministries of other men.

****If you have *The Companion Bible; Figures of Speech Used in the Bible; The Englishman's Greek Concordance; or The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance*, and desire to sell them, write me stating condition and price. I have these on my own shelves, but desire them for other students.

****The ministry continues over Radio Station KMTR in Los Angeles, California. It is now in its eighteenth week, and interest is developing slowly and surely. Having no personal contact with the friends of the witness in that area makes it rather difficult to finance this ministry. It has to be

supported entirely by the friends living there as no other funds are available. Some with the best of intentions just never get around to sending in a gift to help in its support. But I beseech them to procrastinate no longer. Their help is urgently needed.

****This issue being smaller than usual, eight pages that were devoted to questions and answers were left out. These will appear in future issues of the magazine.

****HONORARY AGENTS OF THE WORD OF TRUTH

GREAT BRITAIN. Mr. F. W. Gardiner, "Anathoth" Pepper Lane,
Early, Reading, Berks, England.

NEW ZEALAND. Mr. Ralph V. Gibbs, 48 Sunshine Avenue, Karori,
Wellington W.3, New Zealand.

THE EDITOR'S MINISTRY

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS. Chicago Bible Fellowship. Bible Class meets every other Monday night at 8:00 p.m. in SWEDISH FRATERNAL HALL, 1415 Sherman Street, Evanston. Take Evanston L to Dempster. Walk one block north on Sherman. Class will meet on February 28, March 13 and 27.

ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS. Rockford Bible Fellowship. Bible Class meets every other Tuesday night in FAUST HOTEL. Consult Bulletin Board in Lobby to find room of meeting. Class will meet on February 29, March 14 and 28.

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN. The Gospel Fellowship. On Norwood Avenue, where Lake Drive intersects Wealthy Street. Bible Exposition every Sunday morning at 10:00 a.m. Bible School at 11:30. Bible Exposition every Sunday night at 7:00. The Gospel Fellowship is not a church.

KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN. Kalamazoo Gospel Fellowship. Carl Elleby, Minister. S.E. Corner S. Park and W. Vine Street. Mr. Sellers teaches here one night each month. Next meeting will be Thursday, March 23.

MUSKEGON, MICHIGAN. Muskegon Bible Fellowship. Garret Hazekamp, Minister. Corner of Catherine and William Streets. Mr. Sellers teaches here one night each month. Next meeting will be on Thursday, March 9.

STATION WAIT, CHICAGO. Every week day, Monday through Saturday, 10:15 to 10:30 a.m., 820 Kc.

STATION KMTR, LOS ANGELES. Every Sunday, 4:30 to 5:00 p.m., 570 Kc. .

End Vol. VII, No. 3