

THE WORD OF TRUTH

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BALAAM THE PROPHET

Read Numbers 22 to 24

Christianity is the name commonly given to the most popular religion of the western world. If it is examined, confusion is found to be its chief characteristic. If it is analyzed, a strange mixture is the only honest designation that can be given it. It has no connection with the Lord Jesus Christ, who dwelt upon this earth two thousand years ago. It has borrowed His name, and applied it to its own unholy mixture. It gives the Bible a place, but its repeated appeals to Scripture to justify its position are nothing but a trick, since Christendom refuses to test its beliefs and practices by the true standard of the Word of God. Even in such a simple matter as "This do in remembrance of Me", it steadfastly refuses to go to the Word to discover just what He was doing when He uttered this command. Christendom chooses to do what it is already doing, then appeal to His utterances as its authority for such practices.

The true nature of Christendom is known by very few. Men willfully close their eyes to the facts which if they were faced would cause them to see that much that characterizes Christendom is wholly unacceptable to the Lord. Many good men labor within it to change it into closer conformity with Christ. But it cannot change, it does not change, it will not change.

In the midst of Christendom are many people who belong to God. They have become related to Him by their faith in Jesus Christ. The foundation of God cannot fail. It has this seal upon it; that in spite of the confusion, the mixtures and the iniquity that everywhere abounds, "the Lord knows them

that are His". He knows His own people even though they are unrecognized by the world. In view of the fact that we bear His Name, it becomes our most solemn duty to depart from iniquity. And we have the right to call upon all others who bear His Name to depart from iniquity.

It is revealed in many places in the Word of God that God hates a mixture. In the very beginning, He separated the light from the darkness and pronounced the result as good. In fulfilling His special purposes in Abraham, He demanded of him complete separation. The country of his birth, his relatives, his nearest of kin were not to have any connection with or influence upon the new thing to which God had called him. See Genesis 12:1

To the people of Israel God declared that they should not plow with an ox and an ass together. Their vineyards were not to be sown with different kinds of seeds, and their garments were to be of a single kind of cloth. Deut. 22 :9-11. These things had no moral significance, but since they touched the three most commonplace things in the Israelite's life, they were a constant reminder that God hates a mixture. Furthermore, the simple significance of these things bring a clear message to us today. In the preparation of the soil, there are to be no mixtures. The heart of man cannot be prepared by the vaudeville that is so prominent in gospel meetings today. When the seed is sown, it must be the message of God in all its purity. And the garment of righteousness which makes us acceptable in the sight of God must be entirely of God with no mixture of self, religion, ritual or ceremony in it.

The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is called upon to be irreproachable in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Phil. 2 :15. Such a walk cannot be possible if one gives place in the least to any of the crookedness and perversities that characterize Christendom of today. No provision whatsoever can be made for the flesh to fulfill the least of its desires. The record of Balaam has a very definite bearing upon these things. And in order to further pursue our consideration of this theme, we will turn our attention to the Scriptural record of God's strange dealings with him.

BALAAM

The man Balaam appears suddenly and somewhat dramatically upon the pages of the Old Testament. His history, by many, is treated lightly, he being considered merely a "false prophet", a "spiritist or medium", a "heathen magician." There is no hint of these things in the Word of God, and it is not right that this record should be clouded and confused at the very beginning by superimposing these ideas upon it. We know nothing of his background or personal history, and the most illuminating fact about him comes from the New Testament. We are told in 2 Peter 2 :16 that Balaam was a prophet.

Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.

Faithfulness to the Word of God requires unhesitating acceptance of its simple statements of fact. We must take God at His word and think accordingly, therefore, from the beginning and throughout this study we will think of Balaam as a prophet, and we will not qualify this by inserting the word *false* before it. Furthermore, in spite of his iniquity and cupidity this man spoke some of the most sublime prophecies in the Word of God. This alone would qualify him as a prophet, but he is called a prophet before he uttered these words.

In the Word of God, when the word is not qualified (as in 2 Peter 2:1), a prophet is one who tells forth the message of God. All that was needed to qualify a man as a prophet was to receive the message and to deliver it faithfully. The length of the message or its contents had nothing to do with the office of the prophet. If the message concerned future events, then the prophet foretold the

future. But if the message concerned past events, then the prophet spoke of the past. We lose much of the truth and gain a false impression of the Word when we think of the ministry of a prophet as being solely that of foretelling future events. The prophet foretold the future only when that happened to be his God-given message.

The prophet of old obtained the message of God by inspiration. In this sense, no man can be a prophet today. However it is still possible for men to obtain the message of God and to deliver it to their fellow men. God still speaks to men through the medium of the sacred Scriptures, and all who go to this pure fountain, obtain the water of life, then carry it to others who are doing the work of a prophet. They receive God's message and deliver it. But, there are far too many prophets today who have the spirit of Balaam, and far too few who have the spirit of Jeremiah and Isaiah. This is why the lessons taught in the record of Balaam are so important for all who undertake to secure and pass on the Word of God.

Balaam the prophet loved honor, money and success. This is not an uncommon love among prophets in our own day. In fact, these loves are almost natural, and few men are without them, even though they are camouflaged under such descriptions as ambition to get ahead or desire to accomplish something big for the Lord. The Holy Spirit would gladly give all believers a divine disregard for honor, money and success, but very few will yield to his transforming work. The praise of men is desired more than the praise of God. Therefore we see on every hand men who go into the Word for their messages, but are determined to come out of it with one that will be good merchandise. They take great pride in not being modernists, but they have carefully selected their message so that the fundamentalists will purchase it. They write pamphlets only upon such topics as will sell. One of them stated in writing to me: "I believe you are right, that the dead are dead until the resurrection, but this is a very unpopular doctrine." This is the Balaam character. A man who knows God and His word, but who will be faithful to it only when faithfulness will increase his popularity.

It seems superfluous to state that Balaam was not an Israelite, nevertheless, I do so for the sake of emphasis. Balaam belonged to that group of Old Testament characters who had entered into relationship with God such as Melchizedek, Jethro, Abimelech, and the Queen of Sheba. These were not Israelites, but they did possess a knowledge of the true God. However, where one like Melchizedek was a priest of God and a faithful man, the record of Balaam shows that he was a prophet of God but his life was characterized by an awful mixture of faithfulness and unfaithfulness, of love of God and love for gold, of love of righteousness and love of the wages of unrighteousness, of love for God's message but a desire to adjust it to the situation that confronted him. Yes, Balaam knew God, but Satan knew Balaam, and the price at which he could be purchased.

The thoughtful reader will have noticed that the strange events recorded in this portion of Scripture took place when the children of Israel "set forward" on their journey from Egypt to Canaan; a journey which would in the end bring them to the place in which God desired them to be. Israel, a redeemed people moving forward to God's goal for them, knew nothing of the divine and human actions that were taking place in relationship to them. Balak, the king of Moab, wanted Israel cursed. Balaam the prophet, with eyes closed to obvious facts was anxious to cooperate with Balak because of the honor and reward to be gained. God acted in relationship to these plans, not because there was in them any real danger for Israel, but because Balaam, a man related to Him, had become involved in them. The one who is sick needs a physician, and Balaam was a sick soul who drew out the heart of the great physician.

Balaam's knowledge of God is clearly seen in his use of the name Jehovah. (LORD) in Numbers 22 :18. God had accepted this man, as He does all sinners who receive him, for better or for worse, and He did not abandon him when his condition took a sudden turn for the worse.

It is evident that, somehow or other, Balaam the prophet had gained a reputation as being one who could pronounce upon people either a blessing or a curse. Just where this reputation came from or how he obtained it is not revealed. It may have been that the Lord had graciously used him at some time in the past to speak His message concerning the punishment of some nation, and this curse had fallen upon the nation according to the message of Balaam. Again he may have been used to deliver God's word of blessing concerning some nation and the blessing came as he predicted. (Numbers 22 :9-11 seems to show that he was used to GOD speaking with him). Of course in doing this he would have been acting only as God's messenger boy, but the godless people all around him would naturally think that those whom Balaam blessed were blessed and those whom Balaam cursed were cursed. This reputation, false though it was, must have pleased Balaam, but it injected another mixture into his life polluting it still further. This reputation spread until it reached the ears of the king. And the king believed it, thus making it almost impossible for Balaam to deny that the reputation was false.

And like so many of God's servants today who are willing to receive false honors, this false reputation seems to have greatly pleased Balaam. There is no evidence that he had ever done one thing to create this reputation or anything to encourage it. But, neither did he ever do a thing or say a thing to discourage it. As this idea grew and spread among men, it ministered to his pride; and when a king showed faith in his ability to curse or to bless and sent for him to curse Israel, he could not bring himself to emphatically deny it and brand it as being the lie that it was. He may even have quieted his conscience by telling himself that he had made no such claim.

When Balak the king of Moab feared that the advancing people of Israel might wreak upon his people the same destruction that they had visited upon other nations, he sent for Balaam in the hope that he would pronounce a curse upon them. The elders of Moab and Midian came to him with great rewards in their hands. This made a strong appeal to the prophet who was a lover of money. There is also evidence that men great in this world, such as the elders of Moab and Midian, made an undue impression upon him. Therefore, it is evident that while Balaam was a prophet of God, a man who dispensed the Word of God, there was also in his life a love of material rewards, love of that honor that comes from men, and a false reputation that he was willing to perpetuate. In other words, he was a prophet of God with a mixture in his life. He is the Biblical example of a great multitude of men today. These men are dispensers of the Word of God but they are also pastors of churches. There is no wrong in this save that the demands and expectations of the churches are often contrary to the Word of God. Those churches that are not strong, influential and glorious are making every effort to become so. The pastor is expected to accomplish this, therefore, his life is torn between living godly and suffering persecution or living in such a manner that he and his church enjoys some measure of popularity. Many of these men dispense the Word of God, but they also dispense much watered milk inasmuch as all elements in their congregation must be satisfied. They display great faithfulness just as long as their faithfulness creates no problems or does not disturb the status quo. Often men of God are seen tolerating conditions, performing services or entering into fellowships that do not glorify God. These are judged to be harmless and excused as being "part of the work", nevertheless, they inject a mixture into the minister's life and service.

If there had been no mixture in the life of Balaam, if his eye had been single and his heart right with God, he would have made short work of Balak's message. His proper course of action was simple and plain. In fact, there was no need to even seek the Lord's will or mind when the elders came to Balaam speaking the words of Balak. These men should have been set right and sent on their way. He has no power to curse or bless and he should tell this in plain words to these men.

But this would have meant the loss of a pleasant reputation and brought an end to any hope Balaam had of receiving the lush reward. Therefore, even though his course was clear, he invites the elders of Midian to stay with him for the night while he seeks to discover the will of the Lord

concerning this matter. Even though God's will is plain, he will see what He has to say about it. He is merely playing for time, seeking the word of the Lord when that word is not needed. It may be that by "interpreting" the word of the Lord he can find some justification forgoing. His heart is bent upon going because of the reward it will bring. Even though he cannot curse or bless, it may be that the king will give him some reward for a sincere attempt. But, there is a conflict in his life, so he brings Jehovah into the matter. He wants the money, but he wants to lay hold of it in a religious fashion.

Those who serve the Lord in this day should not fail to give heed to the important spiritual lessons to be learned here. Circumstances somewhat like these are seen on every hand today. When a man undertakes to serve the Lord in any capacity he will soon discover that people will attempt to make him to be something that man cannot possibly be. They will adopt the idea that he has special powers with God, that his prayers are much more effective than those of other men who work in store or factory, or that his presence in the sick-room or at a death bed is of real benefit before God to the sick or the dying. Many of God's workmen are very much pleased to be held in such esteem, and begin to toy with the idea that they have been especially anointed by God. Loving these empty honors, they do all they can to advance their reputation and never say one thing to retard it, so that in the end they get to believing it themselves. All this is a part of the error of Balaam.

When we contrast the actions of Balaam with those of John the Baptist, there is a vast difference. When the priests and Levites from Jerusalem asked John "Who are you?" he did not for one moment entertain the idea of making himself more than he actually was. He did not play in his mind with the idea that he himself might be or might become the Messiah. They did not ask him if he were the Messiah, but he answered the implication that was in their question. He emphatically stated, "I am not the Christ." If he had not answered in this manner, he would have permitted confusion to enter into his life and the consequences could have been tragic. Let us ever remember that failure to declare or proclaim a truth is to withdraw from the battlefield and abandon it to error.

When the elders of Moab and Midian stated their proposition and made their request to Balaam, God's way was clear but it was not taken, His truth was clear but it was not believed and acted upon. Balaam invited these elders to be his guests for the night while he sought an answer from the Lord. There is no indication that he did actually seek the mind of the Lord, nevertheless, God sought him and demanded to know who the men were that were lodging with him. It will seem strange to many that God did this, but it will not seem strange to any who have learned from the Word God's works and ways with His own. As stated before, they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. Here is one who is spiritually sick - sick because of a mixture in his life, and we must not think for a moment that God will abandon him.

In answer to His question, Balaam gave an accurate and faithful answer to the Lord. He made no attempt to color the picture. He feared God and he knew nothing could be hid from Him. It is this mixture of faithfulness and unfaithfulness that gave Balaam his character. This will be manifest again and again as we further consider his record. If there had been any legitimate doubt concerning his proper course, there could have been none after the Lord spoke to him. **You shall not go with them, you shall not curse the people: for they are blessed. Numbers 22:12.**

This was the word of the Lord to him, but he did not give it to the elders of Midian just as the Lord gave it to him. It may be that he did not want to hurt them, or it could have been that he did not want to settle the matter once and for all. We cannot fail to detect a note of strong disappointment in the reply of Balaam: **"The Lord refuses to give me leave to go with you."** He was quite anxious to go, but the Lord would not permit him to do so. What God had said to him was so weakened that it left the matter undecided and the door open if at a later time the messengers cared to return. Balaam did not, he apparently could not, give these men an answer that would cut himself off once and for all from the honors and rewards that performing this service for the king of Moab would bring.

When the elders of Moab returned to Balak, they reported that Balaam refused to come with them. This led the king to make a second attempt. He sent a larger company of men, princes instead of elders, each holding a more honorable position in his kingdom than those sent the first time. Of course, this was done to impress the prophet. Men of such worldly importance could not be easily refused. They brought with them promises of promotion to great honor and any reward he desired if he would curse Israel. Balaam's reply to these offers comes almost as a surprise in view of his former vacillations. He took a stand and made the strongest possible refusal.

And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak. If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more. Numbers 22:18.

By this faithful declaration, Balaam is seen as one who takes his stand upon the truth of God, proclaiming it without fear to the great as well as the small of this world. One can almost hear the applause that came from his followers, who probably stood nearby, attracted by the glittering retinue of the princes of Moab. They compliment his fearlessness and praise his faithfulness to the truth of God.

We cannot help but wonder why these words were spoken. Were they merely for the audience that had gathered? Were they a bit of salve for his own conscience? Was he merely doing a bit of shadow boxing with those who would pull him off the path of God? Any of these could have been behind his declaration, in view of the fact that this bold declarer of the truth of God failed to follow it out to its conclusions and accept the consequences of so doing. In his next breath he invites these princes to stay overnight while he seeks to discover if the Lord has any further revelation. He professes to be waiting for further light, even though in his heart he has not yet acted upon the light already given.

This same attitude is seen time and again in this day: There is on every hand the Balaam spirit in Bible study. Men go to the word time and time again to see if they cannot find some passage which will permit them to do their own will, believe their own beliefs, or support them in doing what they have already determined to do. Their spirit is the spirit of Balaam.

The Test of Balaam

It was just at this point that Balaam was tested. Not to prove anything to God, but to prove something to Balaam. God does not expose him to others, but he does lay him bare before his own eyes. He demonstrates to Balaam that even though he sought the Word of God, he would not act upon it no matter how plain and specific it was given to him. God showed him that he lacked the spirit to act upon definite revelations when these were contrary to his plans and desires. It was an act of grace upon God's part to demonstrate to Balaam the inherent weakness in his character.

Balaam's experience is not an isolated one. The truth that God has given to some men has certainly demonstrated their inability to walk accurately in so far as the truth is concerned. It has revealed to them that they are in no position to take God at His word and think and speak accordingly. "If my board knew what I believed, I would be recalled", is the declaration of one missionary. "If I should say a word about these things, my head would come off," is the confession of a minister. Thus it is that men find themselves bound hand and foot so that they cannot act in harmony with the truth. Their family, religious, social and business connections all stand as barriers against them taking even the first step in behalf of the truth. God in grace has demonstrated this to them, but instead of being humbled by the exposure, and seeking deliverance and freedom by His hand, they reject the truth and are often found laboring to prove that it was not the truth after all. Thus their conception of truth is that it is something they can walk in, or something their wife will accept, or maybe, something that gives them a wide fellowship. In view of these things we will do well to note carefully how Balaam was tested and exposed.

God's test of Balaam was a specific and unmistakable instruction that if the men came in the night to call him, he was to rise up and go with them; nevertheless, even if they do call for him the original instructions concerning the cursing of Israel remained unaltered. Numbers 22 :20.

We can imagine that Balaam listened to every sound throughout the night in the hope that these men would call for him. This is the one simple condition that must be fulfilled before he is free to go. They did not come for him, but when morning came he went with the princes of Moab. This explains why God's anger was kindled against him. The condition had not been fulfilled, but in his anxiety to go, the disappointed prophet ignored this. Nevertheless, the Lord did not abandon him. He is still the sick one who needs the physician. To awaken him to his condition, the Lord will reveal to him how near to death he came.

The anger of the Lord blazed because he went, and the angel of the Lord stationed himself on the road to obstruct him as he rode upon an ass, accompanied by two slaves. When the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing on the road with his drawn sword in his hand, the ass left the road and went into the fields. Balaam struck the ass to turn her back into the road. Then the angel of the Lord took his stand in a lane between vineyards where there was a wall on both sides. When the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself against the wall and crushed Balaam's foot. Balaam struck her the second time. Then the angel of the Lord took his stand in a narrow place where there was no room to turn either to the right or the left. When the ass saw this, she lay down under Balaam. This angered Balaam so that he struck the ass severely with his staff. This caused the Lord to open the mouth of the ass so that she spoke to Balaam. If God makes the ass to speak, then God must be speaking through the ass.

When the dumb ass spoke to Balaam, he saw nothing strange in it. It impressed him no more than if a man had spoken. He actually engaged in an argument with the ass as if it were an everyday occurrence. God was speaking to him, but he did not recognize it, even though he spoke in a miraculous way. He is so far out of the will of God that he cannot discern the voice of God. He even declares that he wished there had been a sword in his hand so that he could have killed the ass.

The lesson to be learned from this is that no matter how simply or spectacularly God speaks to men, they will never recognize it as the voice of God as long as their eyes are blinded by the desire for the world's applause, honors or gain. Gladly would they silence the voice of God, even as Balaam would have killed the ass had he possessed a sword.

The Lord had sought to bring forth faith in the life of Balaam, but he stubbornly refused to accept God's truth and act accordingly. He demonstrated his lack of faith, so the Lord opened his eyes, bringing to an end all opportunity for him to be a man of faith. Faith does not come by seeing, and Balaam can now see the angel of the Lord standing with drawn sword. If he takes one step more he will die, so there is nothing left to do but to fall on his face. He is now able to see the folly of his way. What the dumb ass could see, Balaam with his eyes closed could not see. Because the dumb ass had turned aside, his life had been spared. Numbers 22 :33. Indeed, a mere chance had spared his life three times, but he had abandoned the way of God and thus cast himself upon mere fortune and chance, so what better could be expected. He was not protected by God, but by the mere act of an animal. When a man chooses his own way in preference to the way of God, the risks are great.

The revelation of the perversity of his ways and the imminence of death brought Balaam to a confession of his own sin and an offer to rectify matters. Three times he had been delivered from death by a mere chance (verse 33), and he realized such good fortune could not continue forever. He did not want to gamble his life further and would fain go back to the sure safety of Jehovah's keeping. But, he has gone too far and there are further lessons to be learned. The Lord tells him to go on, but to make no attempt to speak any message save what the Lord gave to him. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak. Numbers 22 :34-35.

When Balaam stood before Balak he was sternly rebuked by the godless king for failing to reply more quickly to his call. His double-dealing with the truth of God had brought him into a position where the man of God was subservient to a man who knew not God. And Balaam was in no position to refuse the rebuke. Having come to Balak, there was no excuse he could give for not having come at the first call. His only defense is to speak some very strong words declaring that even though he had come, he had no power at all to say anything save that which God put in his mouth. His utterance demonstrates that he was far more bold to speak the word than he was to act upon it.

On the next day Balak took Balaam to the high places of Baal where he could see only the utmost part of the people of Israel. He did not want him to see it all, as he desired him to act upon a partial view of the whole affair. This is ever the practice of men who desire to act contrary to the truth yet would like to convince themselves that they are acting in harmony with it. Their eyes are wide open to anything that will support their view, but are closed to plain truths that will upset it.

At this point Balaam demanded great preparations and an elaborate ritual. Seven altars were required, seven oxen had to be prepared, and, as if to make sure, seven rams were slain. Numbers 23:1. There can be no doubt but that this man would hide his unfaithfulness to the truth under a great display of religious service. He even tells the Lord all that he has done, as if to impress Him. But he is ignoring the eternal truth that to obey is better than to sacrifice, and to hearken better than the fat of rams. However, the Lord put a word in his mouth and commanded him to speak. It seems that he did not know what the message would be, therefore, he had no opportunity to consider it, revise it or to soften it before speaking to the king. When it came forth from his lips it was a word of blessing.

Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his. Numbers 23:7-11.

This is God's testimony on behalf of His people. Against all enemies, He was for them. Balaam could not curse whom God had not cursed. This should serve as a warning to all who hate the people whom God never hated. He loves Israel with an everlasting love.

Balaam's message concerning Israel was the pure word of God, but since there was no material reward to be gained by proclaiming the pure word, he was anxious to see if he could not find, perhaps even from God, a message that would be more acceptable. Even though he uttered strong words of faithfulness (23 :12) he was willing at once to go along with Balak to see if some way could not be found to do the thing that God would not permit him to do. The same process was repeated, he was given another partial view of Israel, the same elaborate ritual was performed. He is like those who seek the will of the Lord in matters where His will is clear and plain. Again God spoke to him, putting a message in his mouth, and again it is a witness of God on behalf of His people.

God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of a unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any

divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain. Numbers 23:19-24:

When Balaam uttered these words the king of Moab cried out in alarm, "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all." In answer Balaam again spoke words of great faithfulness saying, "All that the Lord speaketh, that I must do," but immediately after saying this he again followed Balak in a last desperate hope of securing the reward which the godless king would give if Balaam would say the thing he desired to be said. However, this time the king took him to the top of Peor. The elaborate ritual was repeated, but Balaam knows it is the purpose of the Lord to bless Israel. He turned his face toward the wilderness - the barren place where nothing attractive or desirable could come before his eyes to influence his judgments of the will of God. He saw Israel in all the beauty and order that will be theirs in the kingdom, and from his mouth came one of the most sublime testimonies of God on behalf of his people that can be found in the word of God.

Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: he hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: How goodly are thy tents, 0 Jacob, and thy tabernacles, 0 Israel! Numbers 24:3-5.

This whole portion should be carefully read with the thought in mind that Balaam now acts and speaks as the man whose eyes are open. "I cannot see it", is often considered to be a complete argument against anything that claims to be the truth, But, this is no argument. Closed eyes cannot see. Minds that are set upon certain rewards are sure to be confused.

These words of Balaam aroused the anger of the king of Moab. He smote his hands together - an act that probably called his soldiers. He denounces Balaam for his perfidy in that he had blessed Israel three times when he had been hired to pronounce a curse. He does not execute him, but tells him to flee to his place, or, rather, he gave him a chance to run for his life assuming no responsibility for what might happen to him on the way. The king's final words are strange ones indeed.

I thought to promote thee unto great honor; but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honor.

Balaam tries to clear himself by insisting that he had told the king's messengers that if Balak would give him his house full of silver and gold, he could not go beyond the commandments of the Lord, to do either good or bad., True, he did speak these strong words to the king's messengers but the fact remained that he went with the messengers who sought his help in cursing Israel. His life was made up of strong and true words on one hand and vacillating and compromising actions on the other hand.

Balaam's final words to the king show great fearlessness. They are a prophecy of Christ and of His kingdom. The question that doses his prophecy is an important one "Alas, who shall live when God does this." He knew his prophecy would be fulfilled in the distant future. Men could not live long enough to realize upon these promises. The answer is found in the prophecy of Ezekiel.

Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, 0 my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, 0 my people, and brought you up out of your graves. And I shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land.

Those who participate in this resurrection will be alive when God fulfills the prophecy spoken by Balaam.

End

TRUTH FROM THE SCRIPTURES

(Continued from Vol. IX, No. 2)

THE CALLED AND THE CHOSEN

The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ who has irrevocably committed himself to the Word of God will of necessity be required to receive and believe many truths which he does not fully comprehend or understand. This is not strange, inasmuch as it is open to question whether men fully understand any truth which they profess to believe. Some take the attitude that they will believe nothing until the teacher has answered every question that they can conceive and solve every problem that they can manufacture.

Where do those of this mind think that the teacher and searcher would be if he adopted such an attitude? We must receive and embrace even the least gleam of truth, for this will lead us on even though the end is not seen at the beginning. If we refuse the light by which God would lead us on, we are in danger of losing the light which we already enjoy. Once a single step on the path of truth is established, objections, problems and difficulties can mean nothing except that they are obstacles that would hinder us from gaining the fulness of truth. These must be overcome, but the truth must never be discarded because of them.

Among those truths of Scripture which must be believed, received and incorporated into our thinking is one set forth by the Lord Jesus Christ in His declaration:

Many be called, but few chosen. Matthew 20:16.

This is a statement of fact that no believer in the Lord Jesus Christ can deny, even though the acceptance of His statement seems to plunge us into a veritable torrent of difficulties. In spite of the problems that the acceptance of these words will impose upon us, the one who loves truth will receive them as a divine revelation that "many be called, but few chosen", then seek to know what is meant by this declaration. And, as a safeguard, let us determine that whatever interpretation we place upon these words, it will not be one that makes them to be meaningless. We must determine to let the words of Christ mean all that they can mean without forcing any foreign thoughts into them.

The common understanding of this passage seems to be that while God calls the bulk of men to come to Him, it is a foregone conclusion that response to this call is impossible to all but a few who are chosen. This explanation is unacceptable for at least three sound reasons: (1) the context refutes it, (2) it is repugnant to other plain scriptural truths, and (3) it is out of harmony with the revealed character of God. Furthermore, any such action upon the part of God would be hypocritical and would make him liable to the charge of trafficking in human misery.

Take, as an example, the present serious shortage of living quarters which has brought about a deep and desperate need for shelter upon many people. Let us suppose that I have a house for rent, but have determined in advance the family to whom I am going to rent it. Nevertheless, I place advertisements in the papers, causing the hopes of many to arise, leading them to spend precious time and money in contacting me, when the whole thing was a settled matter before the offer was ever made. A man would indeed need to have some sadistic streak in his nature before he would be guilty of such a thing.

It is the testimony of all Scripture that every call of God to man, can be answered by man. Also, that when God calls upon men it is an honest and sincere offer to which men can respond and receive the blessings that are set forth. It is readily admitted that none ever come to Christ except those drawn by the Father, but it is also true that none are ever called unless they are drawn to Him.

An explanation of all passages bearing upon the subject will show that the word *called* refers to a state or condition more than it does to an action. While there is an action that results in the state or condition, nevertheless, we must not miss the truth that the words *called* and *calling* speak of a finished work in the lives of men. This will be seen in passages where the same Greek word (*kletos*) appears.

Among whom are ye also the CALLED of Jesus Christ. Romans 1 :6.

Whom He did predestinate, them He also CALLED. Romans 8:28.

The most definite proof of this is found by comparing 1 Corinthians 1 :18 with 1 Corinthians 1 :24.

For the preaching of the cross is to them which perish foolishness; but unto us which are SAVED it is the power of God.

But unto them which are CALLED, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

In these two passages the word *called* and *saved* are used synonymously, giving the most definite proof that *called* in some occurrences stands for a finished work of God in the lives of men. This, I am convinced, is its meaning in the passage we are considering- "**Many are called, but few chosen**".

Human experience will give ready witness to the truth of the words "many be called". If we consider the enormous number of men who in the past 1900 years have been brought into relationship with God by means of faith in Jesus Christ, we will realize that the called are not few in number and our hearts will give assent to the declaration of our Lord that the called are many. We offer thanks to God that we are among those who are described as being "the called of Jesus Christ". God called us, we answered, and as a result we are among the called.

When we realize that "the called" is a description of those who are related to God, and cease to consider "the called" as being those who were invited but did not or could not respond, then the words, "many be called, but few chosen" begin to shine in a clearer light, and the character of God is no longer misrepresented by the false interpretation so often given to these words. Instead of seeing in these words a record of a sadistic act of God inviting many who were already excluded, we see in them the very gracious act of God resulting in a multitude being brought to Himself.

If the reader will examine Jude 1 :1 and Revelation 17 :14 he will find further proof that *called* speaks of those who are related to God.

Jude the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ and called. Jude 1:1.

And they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. Revelation 17:14.

When we realize that *called* does represent a finished work, it requires no great exercise of faith upon our part to see that "many be called", for we see evidence of this truth upon every hand. However, to go beyond this and believe the rest of the declaration that "few be chosen", takes more faith than most people seem to be able to muster. Here, they stumble, refusing to take God at His word and think accordingly, taking refuge behind the statement that they do not understand it. Remember, Abraham believed God, not just what he understood.

As a help to those who desire to understand the meaning of the Lord's declaration, we will consider the meaning of the word *chosen*. It will come as a surprise to many to discover that the Greek word (*eklektos*) which is here translated "chosen" is translated "elect" in sixteen other places in the New Testament, and that it is the only word that is translated "elect".

After careful consideration it has become my settled conviction that the words elect and election are theological terms that come to us with ideas that are foreign to the Word of God. To most people they suggest some awful mystery which they do not dare to even consider. However, when they are stripped bare of all their theological implications and associations, we discover that *elect* means nothing more than *choose* and "the election" (as in Romans 11 :7) means *the chosen*. In fact, *choose* is exactly what we do when we *elect* a president. In politics there are no mysterious implications connected with the word *elect*. These are found only in the realm of theology.

If "many are called (*kletos*) but few chosen (*eklektos*)", then it is evident that in Matthew 20 :16 the word *eklektos* has to mean something that is higher and more glorious than *kletos*. Therefore, the wisest course to follow is to try to discover the exact meaning of the word *eklektos* as used here. As always, the context is sure to be the greatest help.

The context of the words "many be called, but few chosen" is the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. Since this parable is strictly the illustration of a truth, there is no need to make some application of every part of it. The purpose of all illustrations is to make plain a thing that has already been declared or that is about to be declared. It is supposed to make a truth plain, not to declare any new or different ones. Therefore, it is futile to try to discover who the "third hour" or "sixth hour" laborers represent. The truth that is being illustrated in this parable is the divine principles that God follows in dealing with men. See Matthew 19:27-30.

The Parable of the Laborers

If Matthew 20 :1-15 is read carefully it will be seen that the first group of laborers worked for the householder on the basis of a fixed agreement of a days work for a days wages. The second, third and fourth groups had no agreement or contract, but they did have faith in the justice of the householder, shown by acting upon his promise to give them what is right. When all four transactions are analyzed, it will be seen that while some laborers got every thing they deserved, others got far more than they deserved or expected. The first group never had the opportunity to show their confidence or faith in the householder that the other three groups had. When an opportunity for faith was offered to the last three groups, they responded immediately by going into the vineyard. The last group could well have reasoned that one hours work out of a twelve hour day was so little that the wages would hardly be worth collecting. However, these men were not paid for the hour they worked. They were rewarded because they took the householder at his word, went into the vineyard without any fixed agreement, thus showing their faith in his fairness and justice. Thus we learn that great faith brings as great a reward as great service, and that the same opportunities for faith are not given to all men. This has no reference to saving faith, as that is not our subject.

When those who had worked the full day complained because those who worked one hour received the same amount as they, the householder informed them that he was not paying these men wages - he was distributing his own possessions - a thing he had every right to do. Therefore instead of thinking he was unfair they should have praised his great liberality. From this we learn that if God determines to do something special for some who have responded to His Word, thus showing their confidence in Him, He has every right to do so. In fact, that is exactly what He does do, for out of the many who are called, a few are chosen.

The Called and the Outcalled

The full force of our Lord's declaration is not apparent because some of its strength is lost in turning Greek into English. It would be difficult to suggest a better translation; nevertheless, certain suggestions can be made that will help in understanding the force of the word *chosen*.

The word *eklektos* is a combination of two Greek words, *ek* and *lego*. *Ek* means out, and *lego* is a flexible word translated ask, bid, call, say, etc. Literally it means to lay in order or arrange, as one does when he arranges his words, so as to relate an incident. When used with the word *out* it signifies *outcalled*. This would make Matthew 20 :16 to read: "For many be called, but few outcalled." A translation such as this preserves in English the figure of speech parameosis (like sounding inflections) which is in the Greek. Even the one who knows no Greek can catch the rhythmic force and emphasis in "many be *kletoi*, but few *eklektoi*."

A Scriptural Example

Before going further in our studies, it may be well to consider a definite example of this truth. In **Mark 1 :14-15** we read of the Lord Jesus proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "**The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.**" This, it is plain to see, was a very definite call, unlimited so far as Israel was concerned, and those who responded to it were numbered among the called in Israel.

In the verses that follow we have set before us a group consisting of James, John, Zebedee and certain unnamed hired servants. The call to repentance and faith was to everyone of these; however, to James and John, who had most certainly answered this first call, was given a second call which was not extended to Zebedee or the hired servants. Their response to this call placed them among the twelve men who out of all Israel will have the glorious privilege of sitting upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The called in Israel were indeed many, but only twelve were out-called to be the apostles of the Lord. On the day of Pentecost the called and outcalled are seen as a unit of 120. All of these were called, but twelve of the 120 were both called and outcalled. Zebedee could repent and believe the gospel, but he could not respond to a call that was never given to him. No opportunity to become one of the twelve was ever extended to him. If it had been and he had refused it, he would probably have become one of the most censured men in Scripture.

This example is from that period of time covered by the gospels. Let us go forward and consider an example that belongs to a future day, even the time of the great tribulation. Some who are associated with Christ in that day are described as being "called, chosen and faithful" See Revelation 17 :14. The beautiful and forceful parameosis that is in the Greek cannot possibly be set forth in English. In the Greek it is *kletoi*, *eklektoi* and *pistoi*. These words in reference to any calling set forth the very ultimate of perfection in the new life in Christ Jesus. To be among the called, then to be outcalled, then to walk in full faithfulness to these two works of God is as far as anyone can go in experience with God. When these three things are true of a man, nothing beyond this can be added.

In 2 Peter 1:10 those addressed by him are urged to make their "calling and election" sure. These are the same words as are found in Matthew 20 :16. Their calling and outcalling could be made sure only by a proper response to the work of God that was the basis of these.

This great principle of calling and outcalling can be traced all the way through the Word of God. Under all administrations, in all callings, there has always been a "few" who have been offered an opportunity to exercise a greater faith that would bring to them a greater reward.

It is generally believed that under the present administration of the grace of God that every man has identical blessings in Christ. It is held that when one believes in the Lord Jesus Christ he receives a guarantee from God of such great blessings that nothing can be added to these, and that after God offers us our first opportunity of obtaining faith no further opportunities are ever offered. Or, if they are offered they are meaningless inasmuch as our initial faith obtained for us every blessing that God can ever give to us. All such ideas are open to question, for if they are true then the great principles of "many called, few chosen" does not apply at the present time. However, a prayerful study of the Ephesian epistle brings the conviction that it does apply in and under this dispensation. "Blessed with all spiritual blessings" is cheerfully quoted as if it were true of every believer in Christ. However, before this is done it might be well to note that the word *faithful* appears in verse one and the word *chosen* appears in verse four. "Ye are complete in Him" is also quoted as if it were true of every believer, and since nothing can be added to that which is complete it is held that the believer reached perfection the moment he put his faith in Christ. This is true as far as it goes, but the one who is complete might do well to add to his faith, virtue; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. See 2 Peter 1 :5-7.

As already stated, it is evident that the epistle to the Ephesians contains truth concerning a body of people who are not only called but outcalled, and who are destined to an exceedingly high and important realm of service in the eons to come.

It will help in the understanding of this if we realize that in the Word of God and in all God's dealings with the human race, two great issues or principles are always preeminent. Man is usually found involved in a thousand and one lesser issues, many of which have no relationship to God, while the two great issues are neglected and ignored.

The first and greatest issue between God and man is that which is related to the Expression of God, the One who was in the beginning and who was made flesh, known to Us as the Lord Jesus Christ. A multitude of people ignore this great issue while they attempt to settle a host of smaller ones, such as which denomination is the best, or which form of baptism is correct, or whether it is right for an undertaker to pray for business or not. Men dearly love to argue about these things as if they were issues of life and death, while all the time remains unsettled the greatest of all issues upon which they must come to a decision; that of receiving or believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The next great issue is that of the Truth. What about Christ? and, What about the Truth? are the two most important issues men have ever faced. There is no change in this from the very beginning. The Expression of God and the Truth of God are always before man, and these are so closely related that Truth is personified in the Son of God. "I am the Truth" is His own declaration. Adam received the Expression of God but rejected the Truth of God. His attitude toward one known truth was an indication of his attitude toward all truth.

In the beginning of the work of the Spirit upon the sinner, he is quickened in relationship to the Expression of God, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit sets Him before men, impresses men with His importance, thus making receiving or rejecting Him an issue between man and God. The way in which men settle this is going to determine their eternal destiny.

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth riot the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. John 3;36.

When men receive the Lord Jesus Christ, they do so because of the personal benefits they expect to derive from Him. This is proper since' God holds out such great blessings as forgiveness. redemption and life as incentives for believing. The benefit is all upon man's part for God makes no profit when men receive His Son. There are those who talk about "giving themselves to God" as if they were of infinite value and were bestowing some honor upon God by associating themselves with Him. Let us forever banish such vain and proud thoughts from our minds. God has plenty of the material of which men are made (dust) and He is fully capable of breathing the breath of life into as many men as He cares to make. He can make a man from every shovelful of soil in existence. In redemption we receive everything and can pay nothing. If God gains anything of value in the redemption of a soul, then some payment has been made. This idea is foreign to Scripture,

When man's redemption is a settled matter; the Spirit of God may in sovereign grace quicken the redeemed man in relationship to the Truth. Truth as a principle is set before the believer, he is impressed with the importance of it and the preciousness of it ill the sight of God, thus making receiving or rejecting the great principle of Truth an issue between the believer and God. The way in which men. settle this issue is going to determine. the realm of their service, the nature of their service, and the glory of their service to God in the eons (ages) to come. Because some have never experienced this, or else have rejected the great principles of Truth when the hour of decision came, they insist that God does not deal with men after this fashion. But, as the poet has well stated it:

**Whoso hath felt the Spirit of the Highest
Cannot confound, nor doubt Him, nor deny;
Nay, with one voice, 0 world, though thou deniest,
Stand then on that side, for on this am I.**

In speaking of receiving the Truth. no specific truth is meant:, eyen though man's test by God in regard to Truth may be upon the basis of his attitude toward a single specific truth. Neither are; all truths meant. eyen though *the Truth* embraces every truth, By the Truth a divine principle is meant. When men are quickened by God's Spirit in relationship to this, it becomes his paramount duty to respond by embracing the Truth as a divine principle, even the dominating and controlling principle of his life.

When Truth becomes the controlling principle *or* a man's life, he will never again permit anything to influence him in things that are divine except the Truth, Truth recognizes no authority other than the Lord Jesus Christ and yields to no influence or pressure except that of the Holy Spirit. On every hand we find those who stand for "the fundamentals," but the Truth is not the principle that guides their lives. They hold that it is enough if one holds the fundamentals, and consider all other matters as being nonessentials. They remind us of the man who claims to abide by the principle of honesty and then steals the hotel towels, describing his theft as souvenier collecting. Such men are not honest, for if they were this principle would control their lives even to the extent of protecting the linen that belongs to the hotel.

When men have embraced Truth as a principle they no longer question whether an idea is new or old; they do not ask who accepts it or who rejects it; they do not care if it is Baptist, Presbyterian or Catholic; its popularity or unpopularity will make no difference; where it will lead or the consequences of embracing it will never be considered; whether it will trouble their social or commercial connections will have no influence upon them; what it will do to their so called "Christian influence" will not deter them. "Is it the Truth?" will be the only question asked. If it is, the man who is "of the Truth" must embrace it.

In many circles today *service* is the principle that dominates and controls the lives of numerous professing Christians. To them, there is nothing that is more important than the service they are performing. They are far too busy to consider the Truth. If these people know the story of Martha and Mary, they have never paid any attention to its message. It needs repeating.

Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her. Luke 10:38-4:2.

This is not a parable. It is the faithful record of an actual event. No search needs to be made for any hidden teachings. The teaching is before each reader in simple statements of fact. Martha was busily engaged in serving the Lord. She held this to be of such supreme importance that she did not hesitate to tell the Lord to order Mary that she engage in the same service. Mary was engaged in hearing the words of Christ, in securing the truth that came from His lips. In answer to Martha the Lord declared that only one thing was really necessary. Of Mary He said that she had chosen the good part which shall not be wrested from her.

As stated before, the one who embraces Christ does so because of the great benefits he can receive from Him. This is not true of the one who embraces the Truth. He does so because of the joy and glory it brings to God. John truly spoke the feelings of God when he said:

I have no greater joy than to hear that My children walk in truth. 3 John 1:4.

We end our study in "The Called and the Chosen" knowing that many questions have been left unanswered and that many problems remain unsolved. Of this we can be sure. The principle of many called and few outcalled is operating today. Our calling is made sure when we receive Christ. Our outcalling is made sure when we receive the Truth. We did not know but little of Christ when we first received Him. We did not know where or how He would lead us. Likewise we may know little of the Word when we receive the Truth. We do not know where or how it will lead us. Nevertheless, even as we embraced Christ, we also embrace the Truth and say of it in the words of Ruth to Naomi:

Whither thou goest I will go: and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.

Yes, we may even say that if truth perishes in the hearts of men let us perish from their hearts as well, if it perishes from the earth, then let us perish with it, and wherever men may bury it, let us be buried also. And if there should remain so much as one to mourn our departure, let them attempt to say nothing better of us than that we loved the Truth and the Truth ruled our lives.

The End.

MEMOIR OF OTIS Q. SELLERS SR.

Otis Q. Sellers Sr. was my father. He was born in Greenfield, Ohio on December 29, 1873 and died in Cincinnati, Ohio on September 29, 1946. In 1898 he was united in marriage to Ellen Agnes Moore and to this union were born six children: James, Mary, Otis, Helen, Lawrence and Dorothy. Most of his mature life was spent in the foundry and grocery business. There was little of worldly or material success related to his life as he was neither great nor famous. However, in that day when men are honored according to the things that are valuable in the sight of God, he will be both great and famous, for he abounded in the greatest qualification that men can possess in the sight of God. He was a man of faith. He knew the Bible and believed it as few men are able to do. The record of the Lord's dealings with him were always an inspiration to me, and in the confidence that they may be to others, I wish to set forth this simple record of the ways and works of God in his life.

At the age of seventeen the Spirit of God began that work in his life that in the end would bring him to Christ. He experienced that conviction which is the necessary prelude in the lives of all that God would bring into relationship with Himself. But instead of becoming related to Christ, he became a member of the Baptist church, and this was the beginning of twenty-eight years of faithfulness and devotedness to the Baptist church that never lagged or faltered. He never missed a regular service, he gave of his means as regularly as he attended, and in those years he held every office that a local Baptist church could give except that of pastor. Although quiet and reserved in personality, he was wholehearted in his devotion to the church. The reason for this devotion was that he erroneously believed that loyalty and devotion to the church was the same as loyalty and devotion to God. In fact, he actually believed that there was salvation in church membership, that to be in the church was to be saved and to be out of it was to be lost. I remember well how pleased he was when I at the age of thirteen became a member of the church. He felt that all was well with his son inasmuch as he was in the church.

The strength with which he believed this lie of Satan can best be shown by an incident that happened in 1918. His brother, an active churchman in another city, had withdrawn from the church as a protest against the actions of its pastor. While visiting in our home over night, my father criticized his action, stating that he did not believe my uncle had done right. He felt that in cutting himself off from the church, he had severed all connections with Christ. My uncle defended his action and, as near as I can remember, the following conversation took place.

"But, suppose that something had happened to you while you were out of the church," my father asked. "What do you mean," my uncle replied. "What if you had died - where would you have gone if you had died while you were out of the church?"

"I don't know," my uncle resignedly replied, for it was evident that he too believed that there was salvation only in the church, and that probably it was too great a risk to be out from under its protection even for a short time.

Less than a year after this my father became the teacher of an adult Bible class in the church of which he was a member. He had always wanted to teach an adult class and this assignment brought him great satisfaction. Being a sincere man he began to earnestly seek for something in the Word of God so that he would have a message for those whom he taught. He had always been a reader of the Bible. Now he was a student of the Bible. He had read it faithfully as a duty, hardly expecting to get anything out of it, but now he was studying it as a searcher, expecting to find in it something to give to others. The responsibility of this class was the first circumstance that was to alter his whole life and thought.

Being dissatisfied with the regular Sunday school lessons, he sought advice from a young minister, the new pastor of the church, concerning something he could teach that would be of more profit to all concerned. The minister bluntly suggested that he "teach them the plan of salvation - give them the gospel of John and the book of Romans." This he tried to do. and, while I am not sure about all the circumstances, neither do I know just how it all came about, but I do know that in the task of finding *something* to give to others, he found *someone* for himself. Late in the year 1918 he came to know Jesus Christ as his own personal Savior, and in such a way that he was so deeply impressed with the importance of the Lord Jesus Christ that from that day forth for twenty-eight years Jesus Christ filled every page of his life. He now depended upon Christ for all that he had trusted in the church for before. The place that the church held in his life was now held by Christ. He never associated with anyone very long without telling them, "Men are not saved by doing, they are saved by believing." Again and again he witnessed to the ability of the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive and redeem. He was no high-pressure personal worker, but he did skillfully probe the lives of men to find just what they were trusting or upon what they were depending for their salvation. God alone knows the number that he lovingly told that the faith they had in churches, in self or in men should be placed in Christ.

The failure of the church as a responsible witness for Christ grieved him deeply. He often said to me, "Otis, if men are saved, I feel it is going to be in spite of the church and not because of it." Again he would comment "They tell men to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but they make church membership and baptism to be the same as believing."

From the hour that he knew Jesus Christ, he was deeply concerned about me. The very love of Christ for sinners was expressed in his deep concern for my salvation. Late in the year 1919 Jesus Christ conquered in my life. I too came to know Him as God's complete provision for the sinner. This brought my father and me together in a bond that was stronger than that of human relationship. We were father and son in the flesh, but brothers in Christ. His counsel, advice and criticism were of the greatest possible value to me. Early in my ministry, I preached one evening a popular message. I was somewhat satisfied with it and the people liked it. After the meeting we walked a short ways together and I was anxious to hear his comments. When he said nothing, I knew he was not too happy about it. Finally he quietly suggested, "You strung those things together on a pretty thin thread of Scripture." He spoke the truth. That was exactly what I had done, and I determined never to do it again.

His death was the first in our family and we feel keenly his passing from us. His hope was in resurrection; not in death. He believed that death was an enemy and that resurrection was a friend. He believed that resurrection would usher him into the very presence of Christ, and he died in this faith and hope. At his funeral I was able to say "He loved Jesus Christ, and this was reflected in his life. He loved the truth and this was manifest in his conduct. I am the son of Otis Q. Sellers Sr. For this I offer thanks unto my God."

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

Many friends of the witness have been somewhat disturbed because *The Word of Truth* has been coming to them every three months instead of bimonthly. They have wondered why, and have gladly offered to help if this is in any way due to finances. Their interest is deeply appreciated, and I am glad to say that the delays in sending out this periodical have not been due to lack of material support. The delay has been due entirely to my inability to do the work necessary in preparing the manuscripts for the printer. It is my purpose to issue *The Word of Truth* every two months and I earnestly hope to be able to do so during 1947.

End, Vol. IX, No. 4